

Guide to

# Community Mobilization Programming



## Table of Contents

<b>What Does it Mean to be “Community-led”?</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>How to Use this Guide</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Principles of Community Mobilization</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.1 Participation.....	8
1.2 Accountability.....	8
1.3 Good Governance.....	9
1.4 Peaceful Change.....	10
<b>2. Mercy Corps’ Community Mobilization Approach</b> .....	<b>11</b>
2.1 The Mobilization Framework.....	12
2.2 Levels of Mobilization.....	14
2.3 Integrating Community Mobilization Methodologies into Other Programs.....	16
2.4 Ensuring Community-led Programming.....	16
<b>3. Impact Examples</b> .....	<b>19</b>
3.1 Georgia: Can Mobilization Work in an Emergency?.....	19
3.2 Indonesia: Mobilizing Urban Communities.....	21
3.3 Mongolia: Engaging Government Partners.....	23
3.4 Zimbabwe: Leveraging a Community Fund and Private Sector Partnerships.....	25
<b>4. Implementing Community Mobilization</b> .....	<b>27</b>
4.1 Pre-Positioning.....	30
4.2 Assessment and Planning.....	34
4.3 Structures and Agreements.....	40
4.4 Leadership and Capacity Building.....	43
4.5 Monitoring and Learning.....	47
4.6 Re-positioning.....	52
4.7 Handover.....	54
<b>5. Mercy Corps Community Mobilization Experience and Resources</b> .....	<b>57</b>
5.1 The Evolution of Community Mobilization’s Role in Mercy Corps’ Strategic Vision.....	57
5.2 Capacity Statement.....	60
5.3 Field Studies.....	63
<b>Annexes</b> .....	<b>65</b>
Annex 1: Tools for Community Mobilization.....	65
Annex 2: Embedding Conflict Management Tools in the Community Mobilization Process.....	67
Annex 3: Mobilizing with New Media and Information and Communication Technologies.....	70
Annex 4: Community Mobilization and Disaster Risk Reduction.....	73
Annex 5: Sample Position Descriptions.....	75
Annex 6: Sample Indicators, Logframe and Workplan.....	77
Annex 7: Country-specific Mobilization Guides and Related Resources.....	82

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>CAG</b> .....	Community Action Group
<b>CAP</b> .....	Community Action Plan
<b>CAIP</b> .....	Community Action Investment Program
<b>CBO</b> .....	Community Based Organization
<b>CDC</b> .....	Community Development Committee
<b>CDI</b> .....	Collaborative Development Initiative
<b>CIG</b> .....	Community Initiated Group
<b>CSF</b> .....	Civil Society Fund
<b>CSO</b> .....	Civil Society Organization
<b>DM&amp;E</b> .....	Design, Monitoring & Evaluation
<b>DRR</b> .....	Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>ECB</b> .....	Emergency Capacity Building
<b>ECHO</b> .....	European Community Humanitarian Organization
<b>EIA</b> .....	Environmental Impact Assessment
<b>GEO</b> .....	Global Emergency Operations
<b>ICT</b> .....	Information, Communication and Technology
<b>IDP</b> .....	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>INGO</b> .....	International Non-governmental Organization
<b>LNGO</b> .....	Local Non-governmental Organization
<b>MC-CMG</b> .....	Mercy Corps-Conflict Management Group
<b>MFI</b> .....	Micro-finance Institution
<b>NGO</b> .....	Non-governmental Organization
<b>OCI</b> .....	Organizational Capacity Index
<b>OVC</b> .....	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
<b>PALM</b> .....	Procurement, Administration and Logistics Management
<b>PAR</b> .....	Participatory Action Research
<b>PCIA</b> .....	Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment
<b>PIC</b> .....	Project Implementation Committee
<b>PLA</b> .....	Participatory Learning Action
<b>PPA</b> .....	Participatory Poverty Assessment
<b>PRA</b> .....	Participatory Rural Appraisal (also Participatory Research and Assessment)
<b>PRCA</b> .....	Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal
<b>PWD</b> .....	Persons with Disabilities
<b>RRA</b> .....	Rapid Rural Appraisal
<b>SMS</b> .....	Short Message Service (cellular phone text messaging)
<b>Sphere</b> .....	Sphere Standards in Disaster Response
<b>SRM</b> .....	Sustainable Resource Management
<b>VCA</b> .....	Vulnerabilities and Capacities Assessment
<b>VDP</b> .....	Village Development Plan
<b>VOIP</b> .....	Voice over Internet Protocol

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## What Does it Mean to be “Community-led”?

Mercy Corps’ mission of promoting *secure, productive and just communities* is supported by our strategic vision of “transforming transitional environments through community-led and market-driven initiatives.” So what does it mean to be community-led and just how is that accomplished?

Mercy Corps believes that a **community-led initiative** is one that originates from community members and is managed by community members. Mercy Corps, as the catalyst, is wholly accountable to that community in order to achieve their vision. **Community mobilization** is the process of building community capacity to identify their own priorities, resources, needs, and solutions in such a way as to promote representative participation, good governance, accountability, and peaceful change.

From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, and from cash-for-work to natural resource management, Mercy Corps applies community mobilization techniques to facilitate the process of citizens organizing for positive social change. **Sustained mobilization** takes place when communities remain active and empowered after the program ends. Final evaluations from a decade of implementation experience and post-program research help us understand the community-level transformation and what changes last.

Based on this rich and varied experience, Mercy Corps’ *Guide to Community Mobilization Programming* examines our community mobilization framework and methodology. It illustrates the many creative ways in which the concepts and tools have been adapted and built upon by country programs in the diverse contexts in which we work.

## How to Use this Guide

Mercy Corps' *Guide to Community Mobilization Programming* is intended to be a resource for designing, planning, implementing, and evaluating community mobilization programs and activities.

### Audience

The guide can be used by Mercy Corps staff unfamiliar with community mobilization methodologies, as well as any development actor interested in strengthening community participation and leadership in programming. Community mobilizers and program managers will find field-proven tools and practical lessons about implementation in the guide.

Technical support staff and other advisors can draw on the [capacity statement](#) and impact examples to identify best practices, inspire new program design or articulate indicators. For country and regional leaders, the guide illustrates the role of community mobilization projects or activities in the context of larger strategies and is useful for representation and outreach.

Most importantly, the guide can be a resource for communities themselves, building on the experience of participating in and leading mobilization processes.

- Ever wonder how community mobilization is different from participation? Find out in [Chapter 1](#) about the principles of mobilization.
- Need a community mobilization tool? See the list and links in [Annex 1](#).
- Interested in how community mobilization can work in diverse contexts such as huge cities or emergency settings? Check out the Impact Examples in [Chapter 3](#).
- Not sure how Mercy Corps started doing community mobilization in the first place? Learn the history in “The Evolution of Community Mobilization’s Role in Mercy Corps’ Strategic Vision” in [Chapter 5](#).

### Context

Not every community mobilization tool or piece of guidance is appropriate in each context. However all the tools are highly adaptable to both humanitarian relief and long-term development settings. The guide is informed by lessons from community mobilization programs or activities in every global region – and at various stages along the relief to development continuum – and nearly all of the tools were originally created by a field team.

### Timing

Depending on the need, this guide can be used at any stage of the project cycle; from assessment and design, to implementation and monitoring, to evaluation and transition.

### Chapters and Content

1. [Principles of Community Mobilization](#) – the underlying concepts and theory of change that define the approach
2. [Mercy Corps’ Community Mobilization Approach](#) – detailed discussion of the methodology in practice, including the community mobilization framework and using mobilization techniques as part of other programs
3. [Impact Examples](#) – four brief case studies illustrate field innovations in community mobilization programming
4. [Implementing Community Mobilization](#) – guidance about implementing the components of the mobilization framework, including useful tools, activities, and tips
5. [Mercy Corps’ Community Mobilization Expertise and Resources](#) – overview of the conceptual roots and early application of Mercy Corps’ mobilization approach, organizational capacity statement, and annotated list of field studies about the impact of related programming in several countries

The [annexes](#) contain: a directory of mobilization tools; information about embedding conflict management tools in the mobilization processes; ideas for using new and traditional media in mobilization; how disaster risk reduction programs use mobilization approaches; sample position descriptions; indicators and sample logical frameworks for tracking community mobilization; and an index of Mercy Corps and external resources useful for mobilization.

If you are reading this guide as a Mercy Corps staff member, follow the links in this document or go to the Digital Library to find electronic versions of all community mobilization resources. If you are external to Mercy Corps, resources can be requested by emailing Ruth Allen, Global Advisor for Community Mobilization, Governance and Partnerships at [rallen@bos.mercycorps.org](mailto:rallen@bos.mercycorps.org) or by visiting [www.mercycorps.org](http://www.mercycorps.org)

### **PERSONALIZE YOUR GUIDE!**

Many people using this guide will already have community mobilization resources and tools that work for them. Or there may be tools mentioned in the following pages that you want to print out and have handy. The format of this guide allows you to create an all-in-one location for your mobilization materials.

Mercy Corps will also periodically update sections such as Chapter 4 on implementation in order to incorporate new ideas and tools from field teams. Anyone is also welcome to submit new annexes or Impact Examples, as seen in Chapter 3, or offer suggestions for other parts of this “living document.”

### **Acknowledgements**

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### **Cover Photos**

Upper Left: Guatemala - change to Rosaura Artola Chiquin, one of Mercy Corps' maternal health workers in Libertad, offers education and advice to new mothers and mobilizes community groups for awareness campaigns. Photo by David Evans for Mercy Corps, 2006.

Upper Right: Zimbabwe – Child Protection Committee leaders like Mrs. Pindurai, center, who leads the Child at Heart Church in Chitungwiza, use community mobilization techniques to help orphans and other vulnerable children build decision-making skills and feel part of their community. Photo by Nomore Nyahuye for Mercy Corps, 2008.

Lower Left: Afghanistan - The FORA program in Jalalabad supports the capacity of community workers from the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development to facilitate participatory research and decision-making events for infrastructure improvement projects in surrounding villages. Here community women are coached in new mobilization techniques. Photo by Colin Spurway for Mercy Corps, 2006.

Lower Right: Pakistan - Syed Abbas Shah owns a coal mine and is a community leader in Hazara Town. Mercy Corps works with community and religious leaders in Hazara Town to mobilize groups for proper sanitation and hygiene. Photo by Miguel Samper for Mercy Corps, 2008.



# 1. Principles of Community Mobilization

**Community mobilization** is the process of engaging communities to identify community priorities, resources, needs, and solutions in such a way as to promote representative participation, good governance, accountability, and peaceful change.

**Sustained mobilization** takes place when communities remain active and empowered after the program ends.

Communities in which Mercy Corps works have often been disempowered for decades due to chronic poverty, bad governance, protracted conflict or instability. In other contexts, communities have recently experienced a major shock that overturned social and economic systems and people find themselves in an unfamiliar new reality. Involving community members in a way that promotes their ownership over decision-making and builds the knowledge and skills to carry out those decisions is a complex task. Yet Mercy Corps' experience leads us to believe that it is an essential component of supporting rapid recovery and lasting change. Fostering people to be their own agents of change is the underlying goal of 'community mobilization.'

The Vision for Change Framework in Figure 1 below articulates Mercy Corps' mission of *secure, productive and just communities* and identifies the principles, relationships, key stakeholders, and external conditions believed to be necessary to realize that mission. These principles, which Mercy Corps applies to all its work, are central to our community mobilization approach.

Figure 1. Vision for Change



## DEFINING COMMUNITY

Community can mean different things in different contexts. Teams doing mobilization activities should take time at the beginning of a program to create a definition that is helpful where they work. Some common elements of how Mercy Corps teams define community are:

- Individuals or groups who share a common geographic location;
- Individuals or groups who have common language, culture or values;
- How the groups or individuals interact or have relationships with each other; and
- How members of the community use common resources and make decisions.

## KEY: UNDERSTANDING THE VISION FOR CHANGE FRAMEWORK

**The Center:** Mercy Corps' mission statement – the end result of our vision for change.

**The Three Principles:** essential behaviors that guide healthy interaction between everyone involved in the process.

**The Sectors:** the dynamic interaction among stakeholders in these three sectors is critical to achieving positive, sustainable change.

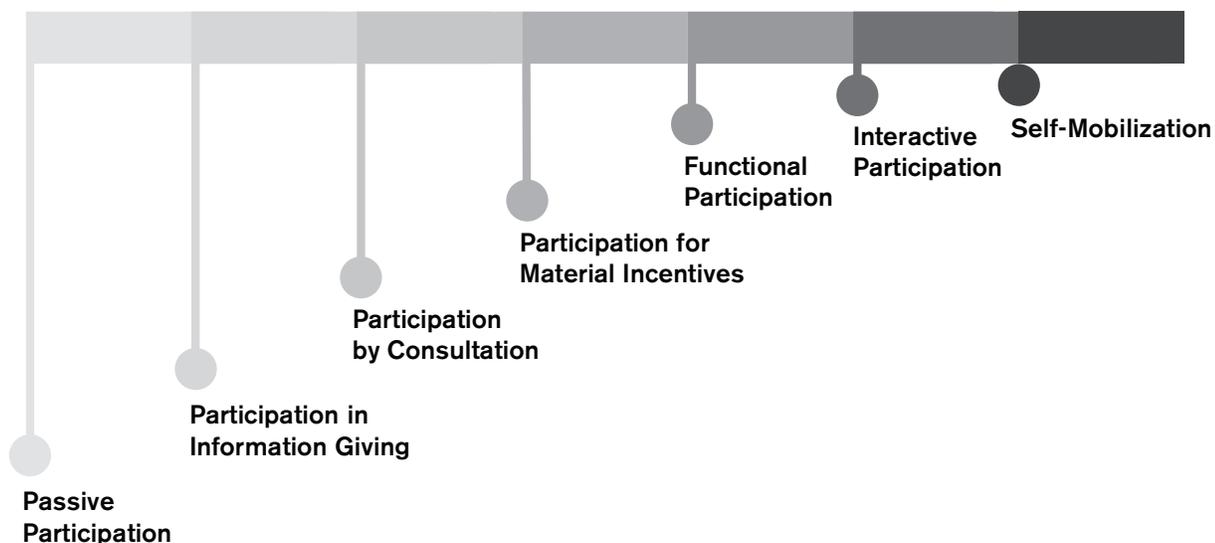
**The Outer Ring:** conditions in the external environment that are necessary to sustain secure, productive and just communities.

## 1.1 Participation

With community mobilization, participation is about meeting the interests of the whole community. When every member of a community has the chance, directly or through representation, to participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of community-level initiatives, there is a higher likelihood that the program accurately reflects their real needs and interests. The approach takes into consideration the different experiences, needs and capabilities of various groups in a community – women and men, youth and the elderly, persons with disabilities and the able-bodied, ethnic/religious/language minorities and majorities.

Participation can take a number of forms. At one end of the spectrum is “passive participation” in which community members participate by being informed about something that will happen or has already happened. At the other end of the spectrum is “self-mobilization”, when communities organize and take initiative independent of any external actors. The figure below identifies seven levels of participation.<sup>1</sup> See [section 4.2: Assessment and Planning](#) for specific tools and resources.

**Figure 2: Levels of Participation**



## 1.2 Accountability

Accountability is most basically the process of sharing information about actions or intentions. Groups and individuals in relationships, such as in communities, are accountable to each other when they honor their commitment to communicate plans and are responsible for what they actually do. Accountability is often thought of in terms of government being accountable to citizens. In the context of community mobilization, community members being accountable to each other is as important as government accountability. Those individuals elected to help lead projects are accountable to the wider community, their neighbors who are counting on them to implement projects in the best interest of everyone.

In community mobilization, every community and all citizens have the right to know the procedures, decision-making processes, and financial flows of the programs Mercy Corps implements, as well as the specific community-led projects. Mercy Corps and local partner organizations sign contracts, have open selection criteria and processes for projects, and require documentation and tracking of all information to keep exchange of information open (see [section 4.3: Structures and Agreements](#)). Transparency helps ensure that decisions that affect the community are made in a socially responsible way – that particular groups, such as ethnic minorities or persons with disabilities, are not excluded from the benefits of projects or activities.

Accountability played an important role in a program in Kyrgyzstan. Part of a community mobilization program included local government officials in a training for the community about monitoring corruption. The project found productive community-government interactions significantly increased after the training, including transparency about local government budgeting.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from, *Training for Learning*, Special Issues on Training, RRA Notes. By J. Pretty. 1994.

### 1.3 Good Governance

Governance in general relates to the process of decision-making and how those decisions are implemented. Accountability is an essential characteristic of good governance, where leaders are accountable for their decisions to people affected by those decisions. When these processes are institutionalized they become a system of government. Governance is good when it is accountable, transparent, just, responsive and participatory. Good governance is a goal of community mobilization, plus a condition for all development initiatives to be sustainable.

In a country like Indonesia, established and functioning government structures exist throughout the country. Long-term programs work with local government or national agencies as full partners in all Mercy Corps-Indonesia mobilization programs. By contrast, in Somalia, where there is not a functioning government presence in much of the country, Mercy Corps works closely with local leaders acknowledged by the community for the role they play in decision-making. Mobilization activities in these contexts can build the foundation for good governance as official structures are developed.



Photo: Tajikistan, Firuza Rahmatova/Mercy Corps, 2008

#### REASONS FOR INVOLVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

- Mercy Corps wants to create communication channels between the government and their constituents, and help the government understand the benefits of listening to community needs and priorities.
- We can model good governance behavior and skills, such as consensus building, transparency, accountability and resource management. In a best-case scenario we can transfer these skills to governments.
- We do not want the government or communities to perceive Mercy Corps as replacing the government or relieving the government of its responsibilities. Moreover, except in instances of failed or failing states, we will not create parallel community-based, decision-making structures.
- After helping communities and local government develop communication channels, the next step is helping prepare channels of local access into national level policy and leadership.
- A critical factor in the success of mobilization programs is the sustained ability of citizens to interact with government and advocate for equitable allocation of public resources.

## 1.4 Peaceful Change

By focusing on societies in transition, Mercy Corps is often working in conflict-affected contexts and those undergoing significant socio-economic change. The principle of peaceful change acknowledges that conflicts will happen and yet there are ways for communities to channel tensions and manage change peacefully. Community mobilization efforts can ask the following questions: *Which projects can best build on connections across communities instead of fueling existing tensions? How does a project impact perceptions of disparity and access? What precautions do we need to take?*

These are the main points of the “**Do No Harm**” concept<sup>2</sup> and apply to all communities. It is Mercy Corps’ responsibility to avoid the pitfalls of jealousy and competition over scarce resources within communities, which can happen when aid or development opportunities are not carefully planned and communicated. This thinking was very much on the minds of Mercy Corps staff in Bosnia as they tried to help communities torn apart by war. The community and program team identified business as the most important common ground for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity or their experience of the conflict. Through the mobilization process communities were able to rebuild local economies as well as the social fabric necessary for reconciliation and recovery.

### **HOW IS THE COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION APPROACH DIFFERENT FROM GOOD COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?**

All Mercy Corps programs are founded on the Vision for Change principles of participation, accountability and peaceful change to achieve our strategic vision. Community mobilization puts additional emphasis on the *process* used to reach the program goals – a primary objective is to build community capacity so that by the time Mercy Corps leaves, leaders and key stakeholders within the community possess the skills and relationships to lead their own development. High quality, tangible results from these programs (e.g. increased incomes, access to education, reduced incidence of disease etc.) are critically important, but are complementary to and should be in support of the long-term capacity of communities.

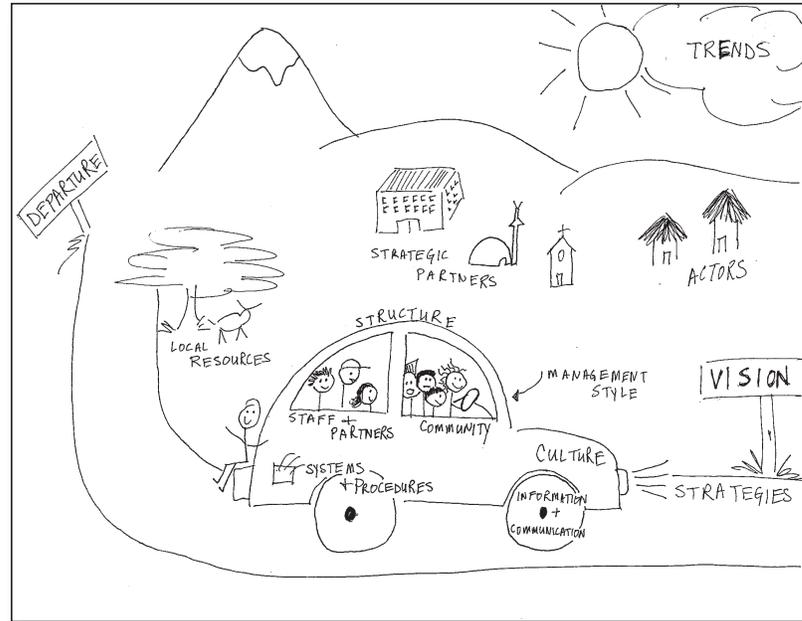
In addition to the above principles, community mobilization promotes the following conditions within a community:

- Sustainable use of natural resources;
- Access to information for all members of the community;
- Opportunities for economic advancement;
- Healthy practices and well-being for each community member; and
- Knowledge by community members of their own rights and the ability to advocate for themselves.

<sup>2</sup> *Do No Harm: How aid can support peace – or war.* By Mary Anderson. 1999.

## 2. Mercy Corps' Community Mobilization Approach

Community Mobilization is exactly that: making sure communities are in the driver's seat of any change process. The image below is of a flipchart drawn for a community mobilization activity in Ethiopia.



A number of Mercy Corps and external studies have shown that community mobilization can help meet the challenges of societies in transition by changing attitudes, norms, practices and behaviors of individuals as well as groups.<sup>3</sup> As a result, communities are able to better assess their needs, identify options for addressing them, prioritize, leverage resources, and create solutions. Often such processes lead to structural changes within communities, a critical transformation that supports lasting change. Some of the many long-term benefits of community mobilization are below.

Community mobilization....	And the long-term benefits can be...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases participatory decision-making processes by bringing diverse stakeholders into a common process</li> <li>• Expands inclusion of often marginalized populations, such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and religious or ethnic minorities</li> <li>• Depends on local resources, both human and material</li> <li>• Fosters stronger relationships between local government, businesses, community members and CBO/NGOs</li> <li>• Ensures local ownership of development</li> <li>• Promotes a more active and informed citizenry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities reduce their dependence on outside aid, as they become adept at identifying and solving their own problems</li> <li>• Communities can better prepare for or respond to disasters and crises because they have relationships with decision-makers and experience in quickly identifying communal needs and priorities</li> <li>• Local governments gain greater credibility with their own constituencies and can better lobby national level decision-makers because they are truly aware of local needs and have local support</li> <li>• A more stable foundation for breaking cycles of inter-group tension and achieving lasting stability</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> [Annex 7](#) contains several studies in addition to other Mercy Corps and external resources for community mobilization.

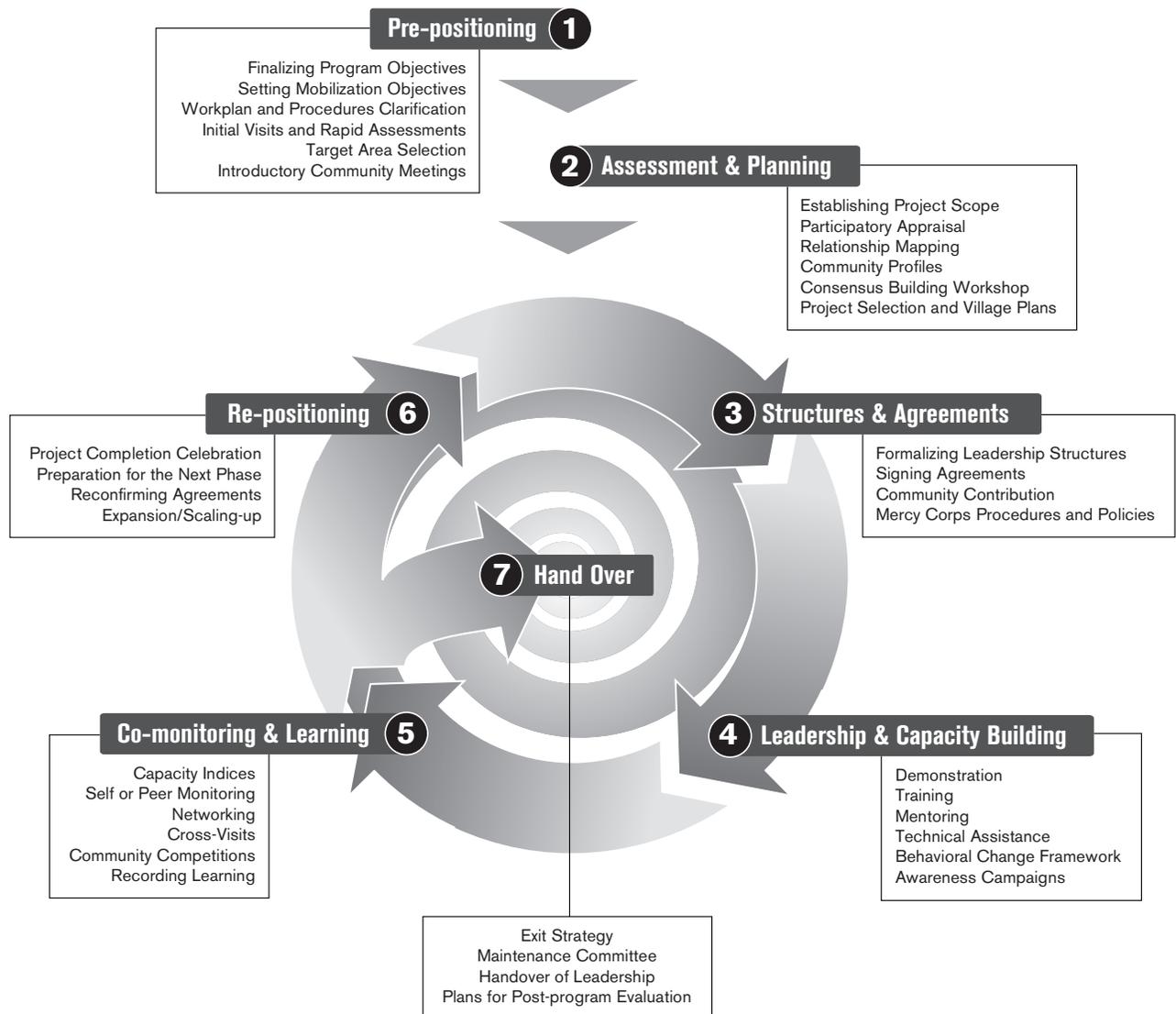
The community mobilization methodology, which easily adapts to diverse local contexts, calls for community elections of representatives to work with Mercy Corps and its partners in assessing needs and responding to them through participatory project implementation and monitoring. Community mobilization programs aim to move people across the spectrum of participation (see Figure 2) by engaging them in the leadership of the overall program throughout its implementation and by strengthening their capacity and confidence to take on increasing levels of responsibility with each new project.

Some programs define themselves as “community mobilization programs” in their title, goals, objectives, activities, and indicators. Many others make use of mobilization methodologies in order to accomplish program objectives in a more participatory and empowering manner. Whether implementing a targeted community mobilization program, or applying community mobilization methods to a program with different overall goals, there are tools and approaches that are common and proven.

## 2.1 The Mobilization Framework

Between start-up and handover, there are a number of components to community mobilization. Figure 3 illustrates the relationship among these components, which create an overall framework. Each of the components can inform any program using mobilization methodology. The arrows represent the general sequence of activities, with room for great variety in implementation given the objectives of programs and priorities of communities. The spiral at the center indicates the multiple cycles of programming – from planning to agreements to implementation, capacity building, and monitoring and then repositioning for the next cycle and new community-led projects.

Figure 3. Community Mobilization Framework



Some of the key elements of community mobilization are below and each phase is more fully discussed in [Chapter 4: Implementing Community Mobilization](#).

- **Assessment** – Getting to know potential communities, partners and the context begins before communities are even selected through initial interviews and data gathering.
- **Community Selection and Community Action Group (CAG) Formation** – Assessment findings help determine with which communities programs will work. Through inclusive decision-making, communities select a representative group or groups to guide project prioritization and lead implementation.
- **Action Planning** – An assessment of the current situation, brainstorming options and drafting the implementation processes of potential community projects.
- **Project Selection and Verification** – At this phase the options prepared through the action planning process are presented for selection by the larger community and documentation captures how consensus was reached.
- **Project Formulation and Contract Signing** – Establishment of a CAG facilitates project preparation and responsibilities. Details are approved by program staff, contracts between all partners are official, and documentation made available to the whole community.
- **Project Implementation** – Communities mobilize their own resources and lead implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Over time, Mercy Corps material and organizational inputs decrease to the point of full handover.
- **Project Completion and Celebration** – The CAG seeks and receives completion approval from the wider community and Mercy Corps, and an event is held to commemorate the project.
- **Repositioning or Preparation for the Next Phase** – If Mercy Corps is continuing collaboration with a community, reconfirmation agreements and new project plans are created and CAGs prepare to take on increased leadership.
- **Handover** – Mercy Corps works with CAGs and other relevant actors to implement the exit strategy, provides final support to Maintenance Committees and works with partners to plan for post-program evaluation.

Leadership, capacity building, monitoring, documentation, and learning occur throughout all phases.

#### TERMINOLOGY NOTE ON COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS:

Most community mobilization efforts establish or work with existing project committees made up of community members to act as leaders in the process. These groups are called by a variety of names in different places: community committee, community initiative group, local economic councils, community action group, and others. For the purposes of this guide, we will use the term Community Action Group or CAG.

## 2.2 Levels of Mobilization

Like levels of participation, there are levels of mobilization. Knowing where a community is starting from and progressing toward is helpful for program staff to work appropriately with the community, while always challenging them to take their responsibilities to the next level.

Table 1 identifies seven levels of mobilization and includes some sample elements of a mobilization program.<sup>4</sup> This diagram has evolved over several years and has been applied in many countries. Before every mobilization stage or major activity, it is helpful for teams to discuss the progress of mobilization efforts and the evidence that contributes to the assessment using this matrix or another process. Remember to think about what factors in the larger context may be helping or hindering the level of community mobilization, such as changes in the local economy. Teams should check their conclusions with the community and use them to inform upcoming activities or setting new targets with CAGs.

<sup>4</sup> Originally created for Mercy Corps' Georgia Field Study (2004) and adapted by Mercy Corps' Eritrea (2006) and Indonesia offices (2009).

**Table 1. Levels of Community Mobilization**

		<b>Assessing Levels of Mobilization</b> 				
		<b>Level 1-3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>	<b>Level 6</b>	<b>Level 7</b>
		External factors and/or poor site selection prevent good project implementation and community mobilization.	Community focuses on project implementation rather than on overall goal. Community has little or no comprehension of mobilization principles.	Community implements strong projects, understands and appreciates mobilization principles, but may not have sufficient skills to continue. Community needs continued external support to stay mobilized.  (knowledge/attitude change)	Community is mobilized to the degree envisioned by the program.  (behavior change)	Community moves beyond the expectations of the program.  (sustained behavior change)
		<b>Successful Mobilization</b> 				
<b>Elements of Mobilization</b>	<b>Project</b>	No appropriate priorities are identified or consensus reached.  If implemented, project quality is poor. No participation in social campaigns.	Infrastructure projects may be good, but have little or no participation, accountability or transparency.	Infrastructure and other projects may be good – CAGs promote participation, accountability and transparency.	Good projects – CAGs promote participation, accountability and transparency. Often additional resources are mobilized.	Strong projects – CAGs promote participation, accountability and transparency and carry out far more than planned with project.
	<b>Process</b>	Nothing happens despite frequent meetings facilitated by Mercy Corps.	Community relies heavily on Mercy Corps to drive the process.	CAG is transparent and accountable, (for example, publishes budgets).	CAG is hungry for additional information beyond what the Mercy Corps program can provide.	Community adapts and develops its own mobilization tools and/or processes.
	<b>Maintenance</b>	No community ownership of infrastructure and other long-term projects. Maintenance is poor.	No maintenance plans are in place – maintenance is on an ad hoc basis.	Maintenance rests with individuals or government.	Maintenance plans are in place and acted upon/overseen by a community group.	Maintenance plans are in place and acted upon/overseen by a community group.
	<b>Community Action Group (CAG)</b>	CAG is unable to unite the community.  No natural leaders (or too many leaders competing) emerge within the community.	Autocratic leadership prevents participation or lack of leadership prevents CAG from forming effectively.	CAG relies on one or two key leaders or government.	Multiple CAG members are active. CAG is truly representative of community (including by age, gender, ethnicity etc.).	Multiple CAG members are active. Community members actively and voluntarily engage in the process.
	<b>Community Contribution</b>	CAG finds it difficult to raise community contribution.	Community completes the projects with the required contribution.	Community completes the projects, meeting or exceeding community contribution requirements.	Community gets resources from government and/or other donors and is able to assess its own resources.	CAG uses advocacy to obtain more resources for itself and others, and to advocate for rights.
	<b>Advocacy</b>	Advocacy does not take place.	Community has limited understanding of advocacy. Committees secure permissions and use of existing resources from government.	Community actively requests government permission to use resources, assign staff etc.	Community lobbies government and private businesses for new resources.	CAGs advocate at a district, municipal or provincial level for rights, access or other society-wide issues, including changes in budget allocations. They often form alliances and coalitions in order to advocate for common issues.
	<b>Future</b>	Nothing happens without Mercy Corps driving the process.	Community probably does not implement projects on its own.	Community implements small scale projects on its own. May or may not continue to use participatory methodologies.	CAG looks for new projects and activities and involves the community in decision-making.	Community implements independent projects using strong mobilization processes.
	<b>Action Steps</b>	Mercy Corps will usually make the decision not to work with the community after preliminary meetings.	The current project phase is completed, but Mercy Corps may choose not to fund additional phases.	Every stage requires supervision.  Mercy Corps supports communities as they identify priorities, implement new projects, and acquire new skills. Active input decreases as communities gain confidence and experience.	First and second stages need careful supervision.	Later projects can be carried out almost independently.

An example of a program that applied mobilization methodologies was in **Ethiopia**, where Mercy Corps improved shelter conditions of people displaced by urban renewal. In addition to housing policy activities, one of the program objectives was improved infrastructure. Mercy Corps and a local NGO partner used mobilization techniques to work with already established self-help groups traditional in Ethiopia. Together they prioritized improvements and leveraged construction resources. In this example the program team managed most of the activities, many in coordination with a wide range of stakeholders, and found that mobilizing the community for leadership of the infrastructure objective was a key impact in addition to the infrastructure itself.

## 2.3 Integrating Community Mobilization Methodologies into Other Programs

Mobilization methodologies can be applied in two contexts:

- 1) As a **primary program approach** where a main program objective is to build community capacity to take ownership for solving their own problems and driving their own development, with concrete projects or activities used as a means to strengthen that capacity and build the mobilization process as well as program goals.
- 2) Where programs with other primary objectives **apply mobilization methodologies** to help achieve their goals.

Basically, any program that includes involving community members in a long-term effort – during the program or beyond – can use mobilization methodologies. This might include organizing a cross-visit for community members from one village to travel to a nearby village to see a successful approach that they may want to replicate. Mobilizing community members to monitor programs implemented by Mercy Corps and partner organizations is another frequently

used part of the methodology discussed in depth in [section 4.5](#): Monitoring and Learning. Other ideas can be found throughout [Chapter 4](#): Implementing Community Mobilization Programs and Activities.

## 2.4 Ensuring Community-led Programming

Whether implementing a community mobilization program or integrating mobilization activities into any program, strengthening the capacity for community leadership is part of the goal. This goal also reflects Mercy Corps' commitment to being “community-led”. Table 2 lists what programs should include at a minimum in order to be genuinely community-led. The optimal standards are what programs can aim to achieve and are a better guarantee that community members will have what is needed for sustained leadership of social and economic development processes in their communities.



Photo: Nepal, Thatcher Cook for Mercy Corps, 2007

**Table 2. Standards for Community-led Programming**

<b>Minimum Standard</b>	<b>Optimal Standard</b>
<p><i>Community-led projects ARE ones in which...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a group dynamic among a wide range of community members, not just key decision-makers within a community</li> <li>• Participatory processes for decision-making are the standard</li> <li>• Members of the community participate at the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases</li> <li>• Communities make an investment of their resources (financial, labor, in-kind or other) to the project as a match for Mercy Corps resources/ donor funding</li> <li>• A set mechanism exists by which community members can inform Mercy Corps and community leaders on how we are doing and we can make or be held accountable to make changes as suggested by community members</li> <li>• Regular meetings are held between Mercy Corps and the community for each to share info on what is being done and talk about what can or should be done going forward</li> </ul>	<p><i>Community-led projects SHOULD also be ones in which...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members have a leadership role in needs/resources assessments (pre-design)</li> <li>• Community members feel confident to carry the project forward independent of Mercy Corps guidance</li> <li>• Community members are taking the lead role in decision making regarding the implementation and future direction of activities</li> <li>• Local capacities and/or work with existing groups are leveraged</li> <li>• There is evidence of increased level of leadership (capacity, interest and involvement) of projects since the point at which community members were first involved</li> <li>• The group of community members involved becomes more representative and/or diverse since the point at which community members were first involved</li> <li>• The project is working toward improving equity within the community (in whatever areas equity does not exist, e.g. educational, ethnic, gender, access to resources etc.)</li> <li>• The above points are fostered by the community and not Mercy Corps</li> <li>• Funding, management and reporting structures are flexible enough to follow wherever communities determine the project needs to go</li> <li>• Communities make a larger than minimum investment of resources toward the project goals</li> <li>• Community members involved include both “more” and “key” people<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• Community groups choose for themselves at what level they want to have influence and identify the capacity building they need (if any) in order to do so</li> </ul>

5 From, *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. By Mary Anderson and Lara Olson. 2003. The authors' research and analysis asserts development programming is more sustainable if the wider community (more people) have active roles in decision-making and long-term responsibility for development outcomes, as well as officials and other influential individuals (key people). Each of these groups serve – specific functions, but both are necessary for lasting change.



### 3. Impact Examples

How do the community mobilization principles and approach work in reality? To answer this question, Mercy Corps issued a global call for case studies that explore mobilization in special contexts and explain how the approach has impact in real communities. Four of the impact examples are included in this chapter and several others can be found on the [Digital Library](#).

#### 3.1 Georgia: Can Mobilization Work in an Emergency?

*Written with Irakli Kasrashvili, Country Director for Mercy Corps-Georgia*

Imagine fleeing your home and having to leave all that you possess on a moment's notice. Imagine having small children, elderly relatives or disabled family members with you. This was the reality faced by tens of thousands of Georgians as they fled their homes in the midst of the August 2008 conflict. Is there a role for community mobilization in such a context? The Mercy Corps-Georgia team thought so.

##### Mobilizing Communities for Early Recovery

Following several weeks of initial food and non-food item distribution to meet the most urgent needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Gori City as well as those who remained in villages under Russian occupation, Mercy Corps recognized the need to help people prepare for the coming winter. Given that the IDPs fled during the height of summer, they were badly prepared for the oncoming cold Georgian winter. Mercy Corps began by forming 'initiative groups' of IDPs, who coordinated the process of identifying winter clothing and bedding needs and acted as liaisons between IDPs and Mercy Corps staff. An open and transparent tender process was carried out to ensure the procurement of optimal quality clothing and bedding at an acceptable price. Initiative group members were part of the tender committee and helped select vendors. Finally, with the procurement process completed, the initiative groups managed distribution of clothing and bed linens to over 3,000 IDP families.

##### MOBILIZATION TOOLS USED IN EARLY RECOVERY:

- Rapid Assessment
- Action Planning workshops
- Community Initiative Group formation and division of responsibilities
- Transparency Boards posted in the community for information dissemination

##### Transition to Long-Term Recovery

The loss of harvests and destroyed livelihoods was the next major challenge faced by IDPs and other conflict-affected communities. Mercy Corps initiated a small grants process to facilitate village-level projects aimed largely at economic recovery. CAGs were established, many involving IDPs from the original initiative groups, and chose projects addressing community-identified priorities such as rebuilding irrigation systems, a market renovation, the purchase of small agricultural equipment for residents, and provision of drinking water. All together these projects have positively impacted the lives of over 28,000 villagers.



In Action Planning workshops, CAG members, both IDPs and residents from host communities, map and prioritize issues of common concern.

Photo: Georgia, Thatcher Cook/Mercy Corps, 2008

The theory underpinning the use of the mobilization approach in an emergency is that communities, even in emergency situations, are best able to lead their own development. What was distinctive about community mobilization in the Georgia context is that it was a core component of the emergency response. As Mercy Corps' Country Director in Georgia, Irakli Kasrashvili, said, "Using community mobilization approach, Mercy Corps was able to quickly bolster livelihoods and demonstrate tangible impact in areas of moderate to high vulnerability and need. Mercy Corps designed and facilitated the integration of its comprehensive community mobilization approach through the entire program, to ensure that communities quickly and efficiently self-select[ed] inputs that met their most immediate needs as well as had a flexible response mechanism that could easily be expanded to meet the evolving situation in communities."

Hallmarks of the approach designed by the Georgia team include:

- A community project selection process that engaged a representative sample of key stakeholders from the community (with special focus on older people and youth);
- A “starter toolkit” for quick impact projects that met the needs of and built trust between community groups, including IDPs and host communities;
- Guidelines for participation, accountability, and transparency within the mobilization process;
- IDPs playing the role of liaisons between Mercy Corps staff and community members and posting updates on community transparency boards to keep residents informed about implementation processes, including schedules and budget and tender documentation.

### **Lasting Economic Opportunity**

Like most villages in the area, those of Shavshvebi suffered significantly during the conflict. Though damage to people’s homes was less than some other villages, virtually the entire population fled during the conflict, resulting in lost harvests and serious economic hardship in this agricultural region. During Mercy Corps’ community assessment in October of 2008, people cited the need to get their agricultural livelihoods back on track as a priority. Upon further consultations with the community, the high cost of processing wheat, the region’s dominant crop, emerged as a particular problem.

The deputy governor of the region, whose office supplied the building where the mill was built, reflected: “The flour mill project in Shavshvebi is one of the most significant community projects aimed at enhancing economic development in recent memory. Furthermore, this project was chosen by the people themselves, and represents a real community priority. This project is particularly important because with harvests lost during the August conflict, people are struggling to get by even more than usual. With the thousands of IDPs we must now deal with in the aftermath of the August conflict, the government is struggling to assist families as they try and meet their basic needs.”

The mill is run by a non-profit users association made up of people from area communities and includes both ethnic Georgians and ethnic Ossetians in an attempt to revitalize good inter-ethnic relations in multi-ethnic Shavshvebi. The association has undergone a training program in topics ranging from business development to conflict mitigation and developed a detailed business plan. The plan includes how the community will pay for periodic renovation of the mill’s machinery. Moreover, the mill has created jobs in a place where employment is scarce. The influx of IDPs increased competition for work, so the work available at the mill is helping avoid potential tensions.

While the difficulties that residents faced in the aftermath of the conflict were immense, the new flour mill is already having critical impact on local communities as they work together to regain their economic livelihoods.

### **Building on Years of Community Mobilization Experience**

The fact that the Mercy Corps Georgia team knew the community mobilization approach very well was helpful in adapting it to the emergency situation in 2008. Years of experience finding strategies to overcome the challenge of participation in decision-making, versus the Soviet-era culture of problem identification and resolution being the responsibility of the government or other specialists, helped the team encourage people to quickly get involved and help lead decision-making processes. Irakli Kasrashvili remembers that “Community mobilization was implemented in rapid way and [the] cycle was shorter and more intensive, requiring more active role of [the] project community mobilization team.”

Mercy Corps Georgia staff are also skilled in helping communities identify and leverage their own resources for development – a particularly challenging task in the middle of an emergency where communities can feel they have no resources at their disposal. As one program manager wrote, “Program staff should always remember that the community is full of possibilities and creative ideas. Many of the capacities in a community are not recognized. One of the main tasks of a community mobilizer is to help the community find these assets and ideas and build relationships within the community to enable the mobilization and utilization of assets.”

Not every Mercy Corps country has a legacy of community mobilization work to leverage when a crisis or emergency hits. Country teams in the same region that do have such experience make excellent advisors or can provide temporary in-country support for rapid program design and post-crisis transition planning. Regional colleagues can also help mobilize resources.

## 3.2 Indonesia: Mobilizing Urban Communities

*Written with Vanessa Dickey, Health and Nutrition Advisor for Mercy Corps-Indonesia*

With over half of the global population living in cities for the first time in human history, community mobilization in urban settings is becoming an increasingly important issue for Mercy Corps and our partners. The Indonesia team has significant experience supporting community mobilization in rural areas like Maluku and Aceh. In recent years the team has found success adapting those lessons to programming in “urban villages” of Jakarta, one of the largest and fastest growing cities in the world.

Community mobilization has long been an important aspect of Mercy Corps’ behavior change programming in Indonesia. In the case of a large urban nutrition program, the approach was specifically used to increase diverse participation and strengthen people’s sense of community for collaboration on long-term development.

### Mobilizing Urban Communities in Jakarta

Mercy Corps-Indonesia’s experience in rural and urban programming suggests that sustained mobilization is equally likely in cities as in villages. However, each setting has its own challenges and opportunities regarding mobilization and behavior change. For example, understanding the roles and relationships among business, government and civil society stakeholders in a community is important for any mobilization effort; it is more complex in urban communities like those in Jakarta because there are so many more stakeholder groups.

One experienced mobilizer reflected that the community mobilization approach is quite straightforward in places where community structures are relatively linear. However, the layers of structure in urban areas – such as how neighborhoods or regions of a city have different relationships to each other and the city government – makes mobilization much more complex. “In Jakarta this method is creating confusion. There is a lot of formal community structure – so Mercy Corps’ committee adds to confusion... [In order to avoid confusion] we have to carefully map about the community structures and then use these structures as the working place. If the structures are not working, make a plan to make sure they are working” and then work through those groups to implement.

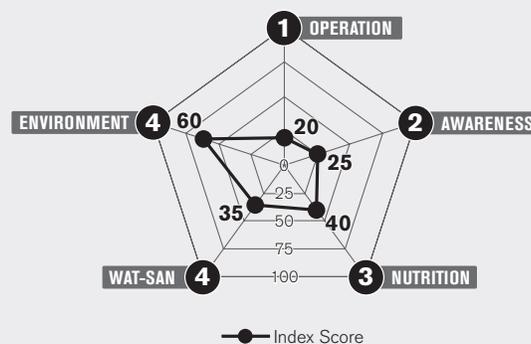
### Key Differences of Community Mobilization in Urban and Rural Settings

**1. Identity and New Ideas:** In rural villages of Indonesia the sense of community unity and solidarity is strong because their remote location and lack of attention from government have meant that they must cooperate to meet people’s needs. However, concepts of participation and inclusion or the introduction of new processes often take more time to communicate and absorb in rural areas. Urban communities in Indonesia, on the other hand, are often more educated and more easily able to grasp new ideas, but lack identity as a collective unit.

**2. Focus:** Rural communities in Indonesia tend to mobilize a broad range of people from diverse professions and backgrounds and from across a village. Projects address a range of different sector issues during the mobilization project cycle. By contrast, urban communities in Indonesia initially tend to mobilize around an institution, such as a school or a water user’s association, which may or may not affect as broad a range of community members. However, the need to work with other institutions or groups in the community can organically emerge (as in the profile below).

Between 2004 and 2008, Mercy Corps implemented an urban nutrition program in over 30 areas of Jakarta. Community Committees (CCs), with assistance from Mercy Corps, created a unique capacity index to measure progress of established CCs in target communities in five different dimensions: operation, awareness, nutrition, water and sanitation, and environment. Data was collected systematically during the project period and plotted into a “Spider Graph” that allows the communities to clearly see their progress towards the index targets.

Community Index Spider Graph



As can be seen, there was a substantial increase of performance overall. In less than four years, nearly 10,000 children benefited, over 11,000 adult community leaders were trained and hundreds of peer groups channeled messages about behavior change activities.

3. *Access to resources:* Urban communities in Jakarta have greater access to cash, while rural communities in Indonesia have greater access to materials and skilled labor. Urban populations are usually more easily able to advocate and press both business and government to release resources for particular needs. However, overall, rural communities are able to mobilize a greater total contribution, including labor, possibly because of greater feelings of solidarity among community members.

### Mobilizer Profile

Anna Manurung has served her North Jakarta community for 19 years as a midwife and community leader “and for that long I never managed to find [a] solution on how to change children’s incorrect eating habits, which has been a big problem for all of us here.” However, after Manurung attended a Mercy Corps-organized seminar about a behavior change approach for improved nutrition, her frustration melted away. “I was so sure that this program is the answer we’ve been looking for to solve to our problem.” Going home from the seminar, she committed to mobilizing community members in her neighborhood to do projects.

#### MOBILIZATION TOOLS PARTICULARLY USEFUL IN URBAN COMMUNITIES:

- Transect Walk
- Participatory Stakeholder Mapping
- Facilitation Method of consensus building
- Action Planning workshops



A community committee celebrated the completion of a project with a parade through the streets of Jakarta.

Photo: Indonesia, Vanessa Dickey/Mercy Corps, 2008

Manurung’s community mobilizing skills led to excellent results. Not only did she succeed in mobilizing people in her own neighborhood, she demonstrated the impact and convinced the head of her area in North Jakarta to replicate it in other neighborhoods. Another part of Manurung’s recipe for success is her commitment to including local “thugs” and drivers, who call her *bunda* (mother). “I usually go to their hang out places, make small talk and check out if they’re having any health problems... I advise them on how to keep their health. Next time when I ask them for a sack of rice or cooking oil for [the project], they are more than happy to help.”

To maintain the sustainability of the projects, Manurung recently started mobilizing kindergarten teachers. “They are the crucial players in maintaining the replication we have made.” Together the teachers and public health workers identified the need to work with food vendors. “It’s difficult to tell people not to eat in food stalls. What we can do is to teach the owners about healthy food and the impacts for the people,” Manurung explains. Together these somewhat unlikely allies are successfully collaborating for the health of their neighborhoods’ children.

### 3.3 Mongolia: Engaging Government Partners

*Written with Munkhzaya Otgon and Oyunchimeg Dovdoi, Civil Society Project Officers, and Mandal Urtnasan, Civil Society Director for Mercy Corps-Mongolia*

In rural communities across Mongolia, Mercy Corps' mobilization approach is helping civil society organizations (CSOs) engage local government groups as partners in solving community-identified priority issues. Several programs aim to strengthen the capacity and coordination of CSOs to provide better services to communities and to work more effectively with the government.

Learning mobilization strategies is one of the first steps for partner CSOs. Mercy Corps works with CSOs to support small community-led projects with four main objectives:

- to empower communities to undertake their own assessment of the issues and find solutions based on their own resources and capabilities;
- to involve community members in leadership of the project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- to strengthen capacity of CSOs in the use of participatory approaches in community development; and
- to encourage involvement of the government at each stage of the process.

The Training, Advocacy and Networking for Stronger NGO Sectors (TAN) program was implemented in Mongolia and Guatemala from 2003 to 2008. In Mongolia, Mercy Corps' team defined community as 'local people, residents who live within specific geographical boundaries, who share common resources, cultural and societal values'. Not a homogeneous structure, but one that consists of different interest groups, individuals and relationships among them. Cross-visits helped people from the two very different TAN program countries compare approaches, share lessons and gain exposure to creative ideas.

The following project example helps bring to life the process and factors involved when community mobilization prioritizes collaborating with government partners.

#### The Community Without Garbage

The *Blue Hill - Our Home* project set out to help community members in several nearby villages increase their knowledge about how to create a healthy environment and to become a model area for the district. The needs assessment showed that garbage removal was the biggest concern among citizens and the community identified cleaning up six unauthorized garbage dumps as the priority for action.



CSO and street group members discuss the next steps of their awareness campaign.

Photo: Mongolia, Mandal Urtnasan/Mercy Corps, 2008

The local CSO *Women for Social Progress* designed a project proposal to work with citizens to improve the situation. The one-year project started by organizing villagers into 70 street groups, each one led by a community member responsible for participating in outreach and linking their group with the CSO and Mercy Corps' project team as well as other street groups. All the group leaders were trained on topics such as existing environmental laws and regulations, garbage management, group mobilization, and advocacy. This knowledge was then transferred to all households in the villages through informal training sessions and door-to-door visits. As a result of this community-wide awareness, the CSO and street group leaders found community members willing to adopt newly introduced behaviors such as maintaining pit latrines and classifying garbage for recycling.

At all stages of the project, local government supported the initiatives of the project team. At the assessment stage, authorities were invited to a community event organized by *Women for Social Progress* and their 15-member CSO network. After the event, the district representative donated US\$4,000, a significant amount that allowed the project to rehabilitate an old building into a local development center, a need identified by the community. The space became the meeting place for the *Blue Hill - Our Home* project, hosting citizen meetings, trainings and information dissemination activities. During the project, community residents recall the district governor being involved like any other project team member. Reflecting on this process, Governor Ms. Erdenechimeg had these encouraging words: “Since the *Blue Hill - Our Home* project started its activities... citizens’ motivation towards exchanging information, attending trainings and cooperating with each other has been improved considerably. For instance, when we organized [citizens’] meetings in the past, only 60-70 people used to get involved in them, but now the meeting attendance is between 200-300 citizens.”

The governor also appreciated the initiative of the project team to invite and involve government officials in the project meetings so they could report their work to the citizens. “This procedure is not a new thing, actually the elected authorities like the civil representatives are supposed to be present in the meeting and listen to the citizens. But in reality, they don’t and we as a governing staff don’t have initiative to invite them...now doing so is getting to be a regular habit for the authorities and citizens. Even other areas are learning from us and trying to use our experience in their work.”

Like many projects, the *Blue Hills – Our Home* project encountered a number of constraints. There were only two garbage trucks operated by a private company and they often broke down or drivers refused to load garbage without good payment. Because of delayed transportation, the garbage that citizens had started to collect and classify was again filling the streets and citizens’ motivation to maintain good practices was decreasing. The project team, fearful for the success of the project, met with relevant government officials several times and asked for a joint effort to solve the problem. The governor provided one garbage truck and at least one collection worker for each area in exchange for a small monthly fee from every household. Citizens saw the value of this service and before the project was complete, 100% of area households were paying the fee. Four of the six unauthorized dumps were also removed and community members mobilized to provide labor for maintaining the land.

**MOBILIZATION TOOLS USED FOR COORDINATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT:**

- Rapid Assessment
- Action Planning meetings
- CAG Questionnaire potential project implications and government relationships

### 3.4 Zimbabwe: Leveraging a Community Fund and Private Sector Partnerships

*Written with Patricia Mushayandebvu, Program Manger for Mercy Corps-Zimbabwe*

Strengthening the financial management capacity of community action groups and other community groups is an essential part of preparing for sustained mobilization after programs end. It can also be one of the hardest parts of the mobilization process. An orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) program in Zimbabwe found a successful model involving training, mentoring and setting up a special Community Fund through a local micro-finance institution (MFI). The process not only served the needs of the program, but also helped communities establish relationships with the MFI needed to facilitate community-initiated and -led projects.

#### The Community Fund Approach

Capacity building in the mobilization program included workplan and project proposal development, grant management, financial record keeping and reporting. Activities featured in many community group workplans included: a) conducting awareness campaigns to sensitize other community members on child rights and child abuse issues; b) assisting OVCs with birth registrations, and; c) mobilization of local resources to provide for the basic needs of OVCs. All community groups were required to identify the resources needed for their activities, what could be donated by the community, and what external support was required. A monthly activity monitoring form and budget were established and used when groups gathered to report on activities, plan next steps and get support from their peers and Mercy Corps.

Following this training, Mercy Corps worked with a local MFI to establish a Community Fund to make small grants to the groups on a competitive basis. *Micro King Finance*<sup>6</sup> has a social responsibility policy to give back some private sector generated resources to help needy communities within Zimbabwe. Community groups were invited to submit grants proposals that address the needs of OVCs, such as mobilizing local resources like maize meal, clothing, and community support for school fees for the benefit of OVCs.

Mercy Corps provided *Micro King Finance* with a loan guarantee of up to 50 percent of all loans they made, with total loan capital not exceeding US \$70,000. Mercy Corps also provided 100 liters of fuel monthly to the MFI to facilitate monitoring visits to supported projects. In exchange, a percentage of the interest charged by *Micro King Finance* was given to Mercy Corps and channeled back to community groups for additional approved and transparent support to OVCs. This innovative partnership has been able to support between six and ten proposals per month, each with a value of US\$100 to \$1000, without the need for donor funds. The program allowed community groups a 15 percent overhead on the total value of their grant to pay for administrative costs such as transportation to the bank and stationary needs. The balance of 85 percent went directly to activities and goods that benefited OVCs, ensuring that the Community Fund was cost effective. Each community group also established a bank account. Under this model, *Micro King Finance* reports that all the grants and loans issued have been well-managed and community groups have been able to submit activity and financial reports, thus establishing systems that, if maintained, can have far reaching impact for years to come.

Mercy Corps-Zimbabwe has now implemented several programs for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) with the goal of mobilizing and supporting community-led responses to address their immediate and long term needs. Child Protection Committees (CPCs), which function as community action groups in these programs, consist of OVCs themselves, community health workers and OVCs caregivers, education, police and faith-based representatives, traditional leaders and other members of the general community.

One ward mobilized local resources such as labor and material assistance which they have channeled to OVCs in their ward. "We are satisfied with the progress we have made so far in our work, though this has not been easy, children in need continue to increase on a daily basis and this is exacerbated by the economic hardships that our country is experiencing, but all because of children, we will never give up," said Maureen Mukweshu – CPC Chairperson.

Through the community fund, the CPC purchased blankets, medication, food packs and clothes and worked with community members to distribute them to child-headed households in their neighborhoods. In addition to providing for immediate needs of OVCs, the funds have also restored a sense of belonging to OVCs and the community as a whole. The grants also helped people see that development could be managed locally and have a local impact.

<sup>6</sup> Micro King Finance is a subsidiary of Kingdom Bank.

## Success Factors and Lessons Learned

Community groups and partners such as *Micro King Finance*, schools and others identified several key success factors of the Community Fund approach:

- Simple to plan, implement and monitor
- Leverages financial and technical resources from the community and other sources
- Empowers and mobilizes community groups for leadership
- Supports local ownership of solutions and dignity of communities
- Reaches wide numbers of beneficiaries
- Nurtures the social fabric that binds communities together
- Rewards good funds management due to the potential for continued access to funding through local MFIs
- Compliments government policy and priorities as well as UN and other INGO work



Many of the Zimbabwe program's most active community members also work with children in other capacities, including this elementary school teacher.

Photo: Zimbabwe, Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps, 2007

The Mercy Corps program team also identified several contributing factors to these successes, including: the small grant size, working with non-traditional grantees, systems to support transparency, and relevance of the projects to the wider community.

### MOBILIZATION TOOLS USEFUL FOR PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS:

- Initial Site Visit Checklist to understand potential opportunities for private sector support of mobilization projects
- Strategic Visioning
- Organizational Capacity Index for CBOs
- Strategic Monitoring Form

One of the major lessons from this work is that the private sector can play a major part in making simple community-led projects possible, as well as creating the enabling environment for sustained mobilization efforts. As Country Director Rob Maroni said, "Due to the current economic hardships facing Zimbabwe, many people could have the impression the private sector is not in a position to assist with support to Zimbabwe's most vulnerable. This, however, is not the case. There are numerous examples of companies and corporations in Zimbabwe which, even though they are experiencing hard times, have corporate responsibility policies in place and are making considerable contributions supporting needy groups such as OVCs and the elderly."

## 4. Implementing Community Mobilization Programs and Activities

Before getting into the components of implementation, it is important to think about the Mercy Corps staff members and teams around the world who help make these programs possible.

### ON THE TEAM! TYPICAL COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION STAFF POSITIONS

*Community Mobilizer* – from the community; coordinates with CAGs, other community members and Mercy Corps

*Technical Officer* – such as an engineer, nutrition or youth opportunities officer; provides expertise for projects

*Community Mobilization Trainer* – an additional position or function of the Technical Officer or Program Manager; leads trainings in mobilization process skills

*Project Supervisor* – responsible for implementing projects in targeted communities

*Program Manager* – oversees staff, monitoring, reporting on program implementation, and evaluation

Sample position descriptions can be found in [Annex 5](#).

Mobilizers in particular form the bridge between communities and Mercy Corps and the role they play cannot be overstated. As facilitators, mobilizers help communities to identify issues they want to address and come up with new and creative solutions. They also help communities leverage outside resources that may help them achieve their goals. The following are some reflections from mobilizers from diverse contexts about what makes their work successful.<sup>7</sup>

### Experienced Mobilizers' Advice to New Mobilizers

*1. Know the Community.* In order to engage people in a successful project outcome, it is essential to understand community members, their interests, and what would motivate their involvement. It is also essential to know the local culture and community schedules, in order to design interventions that will work well for them. For example, there may be days in the week or month that people already gather regularly so could more easily participate.

*2. Work with Existing Leaders.* Having strong and capable community leaders is essential to program success. Mercy Corps can support the capacity building of leaders, particularly in technical areas. However, knowing who are the natural leaders, the ones that people defer to, and engaging them early and often in the program, will help engage the rest of the community. This includes knowing the existing government or local decision-making structure. Pay close attention, often leaders can be people you do not expect, such as women or youth or others who have the respect of a large group of people but may not hold an official title.

*3. Ensure Regular and Clear Communication.* Building a habit of regular and clear communication is so important to guarantee that communities understand all the elements of the program and that you understand the community. This means asking lots of questions, listening for what people may not be saying directly, and then asking again to be sure everyone is clear on an issue or next steps.



Photo: Uganda, Thatcher Cook for Mercy Corps, 2006

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from the Eritrea and Indonesia community mobilization training resources.

**4. Develop Strong Facilitation Skills.** The skill mobilizers most rely on is facilitation. It is challenging to encourage a community while allowing them to lead their own process since you will have many ideas from your own experience. Your facilitation is essential to successfully building community capacity because you are also modeling mobilization skills. Even the most experienced development professionals can learn more about being good facilitators, either through seeking additional training or asking for colleagues to provide you with frequent feedback.

**5. Find Ways to Motivate Communities.** Getting people to engage with community leadership can be hard; community members must deal with changes to their daily routine, manage complicated relationships with other community members, learn new skills, take on challenging tasks such as financial tracking, remain patient through delays, explain to other members of their community what is happening, and on and on. It is easy to get discouraged! A good mobilizer understands these challenges and works to re-energize community members. It goes a long way if you can find a way to help community members see the long-term benefits of their work. Marking progress in projects with small celebrations in the community or having events to look forward to, like cross-visits with other communities, are very effective.

**6. Know Mercy Corps Procedures.** In order to explain them to community members, mobilizers should understand all guidelines, standards and procedures held by Mercy Corps in that country. It is discouraging to communities when projects are delayed or activities have to be redone because a procedure was not followed. This is in your control to manage with a little preparation. Discuss complex procedures with Mercy Corps country or program leadership until you are confident in your understanding and ability to implement.

#### **MOBILIZERS' TIPS ON COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION**

**M**aintain a sense of humor and be patient. You might have a deadline to keep, but others may have other priorities.

**O**pen your mind and heart and you will receive a warm welcome; a mutually beneficial relationship will develop.

**B**uild upon the positive aspects of the local culture, religion, knowledge, and tradition; brick by brick, work with the people to build up their lives with dignity and honor.

**I**nitiate but do not lead. You are a catalyst of inspiring development activities, not the boss.

**L**isten, listen and listen again. Learn from the men and women: the what's, the why's, the when's, and the how's of their situation.

**I**dentify the people's needs, or rather facilitate them to identify their needs. Remember awareness-raising is the first step towards mobilization.

**S**it together, share ideas and experiences – this is a two-way process.

**A**void talking in terms of money, rather talk in terms of working together as the value of a project. Do not be authoritative.

**T**alk simply. Do not use complex language; your task is to communicate effectively.

**I**nvolve the community from the very beginning; do not start a project, and then start to bring in community participation mid-way through.

**O**rganize the people to draw up their own plans for their development; simple activities which can easily be understood and realistically carried out.

**N**ever assume that you are right and they are wrong; in most cases you will discover that they are in fact right but you had failed to listen!

The rest of Chapter 4 discusses each of the components of the mobilization framework, from pre-positioning through handover, per Figure 3 above. And all of the tools listed in the following sections are consolidated in [Annex 1](#).

But remember, there is no one way to 'do' community mobilization. Many of the tools referenced also have multiple applications. For instance, while the participatory appraisal tools are discussed in the Assessment and Planning section, they can also be used during Pre-positioning, as well as throughout Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation.

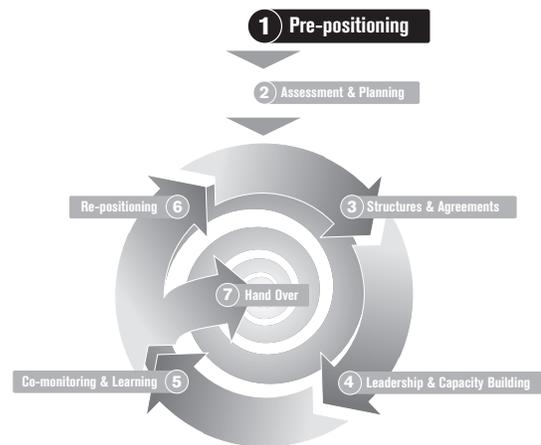
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Finally, there is a great deal of room for creativity in adapting mobilization activities or combining tools in order to meet the specific needs of a program or community. What will work best in the context is determined by many factors and takes curiosity to discover. A few questions for Mercy Corps teams to consider:

- *What really motivates this community?*
- *What are the main interests among community members at this particular time?*
- *What are their hopes for the future?*
- *What cultural practices are positive for the community that the mobilization process can reinforce?*
- *What resources, heritage or local knowledge do community members value most?*
- *Whose voices are missing from decision-making in the community?*
- *Are there external influences that that are helpful or harmful for the community that projects should take into consideration?*

## 4.1 Pre-Positioning

Pre-positioning refers to the initial stage of a program; in the case of community mobilization, this is the phase before entering the communities. Program objectives will already be described in the funded proposal. However, this is only one level of planning, and it is important that Mercy Corps mobilization teams carefully pre-position themselves for successful implementation. This includes establishing specific objectives related to community mobilization, drafting a workplan for the program team, and clarifying all procedures. Initial visits and rapid assessments will help with target area selection. Pre-positioning also includes initial contact with the communities and program partners to set expectations and gather information important to planning. Decisions made at this phase influence the entire mobilization process.



### Finalizing Program Objective(s)

Having a clear program objective and knowing that the community(ies) shares that objective is necessary for building common ground from the beginning. Program managers should meet with their mobilization team and analyze the program logframe and objective(s) together, so each member of the team understands the concepts, has the opportunity to ask questions, and practice discussing the objectives for when they start working with communities.<sup>8</sup>

### Setting Mobilization Objective(s)

If the proposal does not include specific objectives for the mobilization element of the program, or mobilization is a methodology employed in a larger program, setting the mobilization objectives can be a first activity of the program team. To craft a mobilization objective, it is helpful to first assess the extent of current community participation, and to set targets for what level the program team wants to move them to over the life of the program. Refer to [Table 1](#) in Chapter 2. Mobilization objectives should describe what achieving that target would look like in reality, such as:

1. Within six months the community, as represented by the CAG, will have created a five-year plan and taken it, independently, to several government ministries to try to gain support.
2. The community will take the lead in every activity related to the program, with a minimum of 50 percent female participation.
3. Within two years 75 percent of community members will be able to describe the difference between healthy and unhealthy food for children and will have taken action on provision of unhealthy food in schools.
4. Youth actively promote community actions responsive to priority issues.
5. Projects are identified and implemented by the community without Mercy Corps initiative or support.
6. Proportion of project costs contributed by the community increases by 25 percent from initial project to last project.

**Tools for Pre-positioning**

- Initial Site Visit Checklist
- Rapid Assessment Tool
- Desk Study Checklist
- Focus Group Facilitation Guide

<sup>8</sup> This is also the point at which Mercy Corps can negotiate changes to the program objectives or activities if circumstances have changed since the proposal was written.

## Workplan

A workplan is a description of activities - when they will happen within the calendar of the program, who is responsible and who is involved (see [Annex 6](#) for a sample community mobilization program workplan). An established yet flexible workplan is essential to knowing how to answer the inevitable questions from the community members about what will happen and when. It is also a good tool for coordinating among internal Mercy Corps teams or departments (for example with logistics or procurement managers or other programs managed from the same sub-office) so all staff can be prepared and act efficiently. It may be necessary to make changes to the workplan based on assessment activities and changing circumstances throughout implementation, so be sure to leave room for flexibility.

### When to revise workplans:

- Community leaders or government officials change so it is no longer clear who is responsible for planned activities;
- A natural disaster, health epidemic or other unexpected event occurs;
- Conflict dynamics change in the community or surrounding area;
- Materials or technical assistance are no longer available on the timeframe established;
- Increase or decrease in available funds.



*Tip: Be sure that all mobilizers are trained in Procurement, Administration (including financial) and Logistics Management (PALM) procedures. Mercy Corps' [PALM](#) and [Sub-grants](#) manuals are available on the Digital Library, and it is the responsibility of mobilization teams to be sure all relevant managers and officers are well versed in the workplan of the mobilization program. Doing so will give mobilization teams more time to focus on working directly with communities and avoid program delays.*

## Initial Visits and Rapid Assessments

Getting to know the communities and partners begins before they are selected, with initial interviews and data gathering. At minimum, all relevant authorities must be notified, and it is preferable that they are involved in the process of gathering information and selecting target areas, organizations, communities, and beneficiaries. Coordination with other government agencies at a national, regional or district level, as well as NGOs and civil society actors, is important at this stage for more effective collaboration throughout the program. [Tools 1 and 2](#) give additional information about initial community visits.

The goals of rapid assessments should be tailored to the program and mobilization objectives. For example, the assessment goals for a community mobilization program focused on improving food security might include:

- To understand the demographics of specific communities and communities across a target area and food needs among sub-groups within communities;
- To gain a better understanding of communal decision-making mechanisms;
- To study relationships between and among issues relevant to the scope of the program (e.g. among livelihood systems, food insecurity, and food aid dependency);
- To gain a better understanding of how seasonality relates to the issues of the program and how different sub-groups within communities are impacted (e.g. differences among people of different livelihoods).

Information can be gathered through focus groups, surveying, or participatory methods described in [section 4.2](#) below.



*Tip: Many mobilization teams find it helpful to prepare a brochure or leaflet with initial information, which briefly describes Mercy Corps, the program, the community mobilization process and expectations from local government and communities. This brochure/leaflet can be distributed to all the stakeholders during the initial visit and read on the radio or at public gatherings in order to ensure many people have access to the information at early stages of implementation.*

## Mapping Actors and Potential Partnerships

Rapid assessments help Mercy Corps understand all the stakeholders operating in the area where Mercy Corps will be working, including local NGOs, INGOs, government agencies and others. *Be sensitive to and respectful of their work, seeking to build on efforts already done and filling a needed gap for the community.* Keep an open mind about potential partnerships that will further program objectives.

Taking the time to map relevant actors – graphically listing the groups and drawing different types of lines among them to represent kinds of relationships creates the map – can help reveal opportunities for collaboration among groups with shared interest and avoid problems at this early stage. In particular, map all government actors and stakeholders/interested groups to determine natural alliances and the most strategic partnerships within the government. Begin building relationships by identifying shared goals and complementary resources. It is likely that government and other groups, or in many cases the individuals themselves, will also play a role during the program's exit strategy so their participation in this initial stage is important for sustainability.

If possible, it is best for Mercy Corps and local NGO/CBO partners to approach the groups identified through relationship mapping together in order to reinforce the partnership and set clear expectations of everyone's role from the start. [Tool 13](#): Relationship Mapping is helpful at this stage for the Mercy Corps program team, as well as for use with CAGs during project design.

Partnership for Mercy Corps-**Indonesia's** Healthy Start program began at the pre-positioning and planning stage, including with the North Jakarta Municipality Health Office. The program team conducted problem identification and planning workshops with the health office to share findings of a pre-program survey about key health issues. A detailed implementation plan was created based on results of the workshops and revised with partners' input. This process built a good relationship for program staff to interface with the government partners almost every day during implementation. Healthy Start program staff and community groups presented the program plans and activities under Mercy Corps Indonesia's Urban Program, which resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding between Mercy Corps and the Governor of Jakarta for the implementation of the Urban Program. The agreement has proven a very effective tool to mobilize support from the government at the municipal, district, and sub-district levels.

## Target Area Selection

After initial meetings with authorities and partners, community selection criteria must be established by the mobilization team in an open and transparent process. Authorities, partners and the community at large should feel that they have contributed to and can accept the selection criteria. Selection criteria might include:

- Population of a village or group of villages;
- Degree to which the locations were affected by an event such as a drought or conflict;
- The proximity to other communities being considered for the program;
- Other organizations already working in the community; and/or
- Willingness to adhere to program principles (such as ensuring equitable representation on CAG; cooperating with other communities, etc.).

[Tool 10](#) includes other sample selection criteria and advice for weighing various factors when making final decisions.

## Introduction Meetings in Communities

Since community mobilization aims to support community-identified priorities while staying within the overall program objectives and budget, initial community meetings are important for ensuring all groups are clear about expectations. The mobilization team should work together before the initial meetings to ensure their message is consistent with any material already distributed during the rapid assessment and that the further detail shared with communities will be clear.

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Key issues to be addressed in introduction meetings include:

- Basic program description, including geographic scope, source of funding, and organizations involved;
- Types of projects the community may be able to implement (e.g. programmatic scope);
- Scale of projects the community may be able to implement (e.g. budget parameters);
- Requirements for participation such as CAG requirements and community contribution requirements;
- Overview of mobilization principles and approach;
- Timeframe for next steps; and
- The eventual goal of handover.

All those attending the meeting should also have the opportunity to ask questions in the meeting and know how to get additional information.



*Tip: Think like a community member! Mobilization teams can brainstorm questions that they would like to know about a program and mobilization opportunity if they were hearing about Mercy Corps and the program for the first time. Ask experienced mobilization staff what type of questions have been asked in the past. Discuss how to incorporate the information to address these questions at community meetings or how to prepare to answer questions if they arise.*

## 4.2 Assessment and Planning

These early interactions with the community may be the most important of the mobilization effort. It is in this stage that mobilization teams have the best opportunity to set the tone for working toward community ownership of a project; therefore, inclusion and modeling behavior is crucial.

[Annex 1](#) lists several of the many tools and methods for conducting assessments and teams may have others that they have utilized for a specific country or sector. Similarly, there are a number of ways a planning process can be designed with the community. Sometimes it can be short and simple, and in the same event as the assessment – a brainstormed list of possible projects ranked and prioritized, for example. Other times, planning processes may need to take place over the course of several meetings with a series of groups, as in the case of a multi-year village planning process. What is most important is that the whole community feels they have had input in the process, a role in moving the plan forward, and that the plan reflects their best interests.

### Establishing Project Scope

A good question for mobilization teams to ask before designing an assessment and planning approaches is: what can the community realistically decide? Projects can be either *focused* on a specific sector or issue (e.g. improved water quality), or can be *open*, meaning that the community is free to prioritize and implement projects addressing any issue that they choose. This question is also influenced by the nature of the program objectives established in the proposal, and the resources available for community projects.

If the project scope is focused, use the information gathered during the rapid assessment and any subsequent conversations with community leaders or members to determine who in the community has particular interests in working on the focused issues. These stakeholders should participate in assessments and be represented on CAGs. If the project scope is open, work with both formal and informal community leaders to gather people from all sectors and populations within the community and ensure that the initial meeting is at an appropriate time and location for maximum participation.

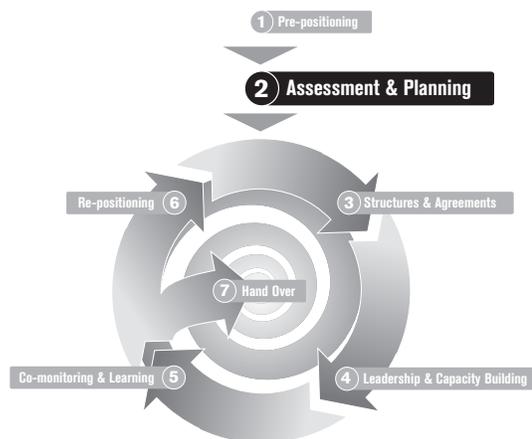
### Participatory Appraisal

PRA, Participatory Rural Appraisal, is the most commonly used set of participatory assessment tools. PRA describes a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan and take action. The philosophy behind PRA is that community members are the best experts about their own situations. Facilitators are involved to guide the discussion and help community members tap their own knowledge and resources and use them effectively.<sup>9</sup>

PRA approaches influenced Mercy Corps' early community mobilization models, and despite the name, PRA is widely used and relevant for urban communities as well as rural areas.

#### FAMILY OF PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

- PLA** Participatory Learning Action
- RRA** Rapid Rural Appraisal
- PRA** Participatory Rural Appraisal
- PRA** Participatory Research and Assessment
- PAR** Participatory Action Research
- PPA** Participatory Poverty Assessments



- PRA Sample Tools and Interview Guide
- Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment Checklist
- Environmental Memorandum
- Community Assessment Tool (Tension Index)
- Community Profile
- Community Selection
- Strategic Visioning
- Group Facilitation Manual
- Scored Relationship Mapping
- Action Planning Process
- Project Prioritization Meeting Tips
- Village Development Planning

<sup>9</sup> Early publications include *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*. By Robert Chambers. 1983.

PRA helps groups analyze local problems and formulate tentative solutions with local stakeholders. It makes use of a wide range of visualisation methods and mainly deals with a community-level scale of analysis. These methods can be very effective for getting detailed information from large groups. The emphasis on ensuring community feedback broadens the group of people involved, while keeping the facilitation of data-gathering and analysis manageable.



*Tip: PRA tools are now being used by many CBO/NGOs in some parts of the world so communities may have done activities in the past with others. Ask about whether this is the case and if so, use any existing PRA-generated information to inform the new assessment. Although PRA was not originally intended to collect statistically significant information, it is increasingly used in combination with other methodologies to fulfil more scientific information needs. Some PRA methods can provide baseline information that mobilization program teams and partners can monitor against throughout implementation. Because many of these methods are visual, they can be used with those who are illiterate or have low literacy, which encourages the participation of all members of the community.*

As with community mobilization in general, there is no single way to 'do' PRA. There are however core principles and over 30 methods or tools available to guide teamwork, do sampling, structure discussions and visualise analysis.

### Core PRA Principles

- *Sustained learning process:* enhancing cumulative learning for action by participants is the focus and has three outputs: identifying strategies for improvement, motivating people to undertake these strategies, and enhancing their capacity for solving problems.
- *Different perspectives in group-based analysis:* PRA explicitly seeks insights from and an understanding of the needs of different individuals and groups, which may be conflicting but will better show the complexity of local situations to aid appropriate program planning.
- *Key role for facilitators:* including different perspectives often means challenging local traditions of communication, which requires sensitive facilitation.
- *Systemic and methodological basis:* creating a structured process that explores problems within the wider context and not just focusing on a narrow slice of reality - from description to analysis and action.
- *Context-specific:* unique social/physical conditions requires building a process of discussion, communication, and conflict resolution - which by necessity evolves out of the specifics of the local context.

See [Tool 4: PRA/PLA Sample Tools](#) and [Tool 5: Semi-structured Interview Guide](#). The combination and sequence of methods will emerge from the context.

Two important strategies for the use of PRA methods are having a multidisciplinary team and practicing "triangulation".

- A diverse, multidisciplinary team is composed of representatives of both sexes, with different sector backgrounds (e.g. health, agriculture, livelihoods) and different roles in the program (e.g. assessor, program management, field worker). This kind of team ensures that all viewpoints are represented, as well as modeling collaboration for the community. During the mobilization process if mobilizers feel that an expert in some area/sector is needed, they can request them.



Photo: Colin Spurway/Mercy Corps, 2002





*Tip: Another way to gather data about a community is an immersion and observation process. Immersion involves going to and staying in the community – for a day, overnight, or a week – and simply observing the community, watching people and their interactions, perhaps asking questions, writing detailed notes and, with the permission of the community members, taking photos; basically getting the feel for the community. An advantage of this method is that it allows mobilizers to take in information they might not have known to ask about, but which could be vital to the mobilization process.*

## Community Profiles

Information from assessments and mapping can be assembled into a community profile. [Tool 9](#) is an adaptable outline of a community profile. It lists general categories of information to include such as the community's:

- Main sources of income
- Major problems
- Resources
- Relationship with local government
- Existing socio-economic infrastructure (e.g. schools)
- Any ongoing projects
- Active and inactive community organizations

Community profiles should be created with community members and shared with the wider community before being used by Mercy Corps and partner organizations to inform their work. Profiles can also be used by the community in the future as they consider other projects or long-term [village development plans](#). They should also be referred to by other Mercy Corps programs that work in the same community in order to avoid unnecessarily repeating the process of creating a profile.

## Consensus-building Workshop

Assessments, mapping, community profiles, and similar participatory processes can generate a large pool of issues that the community would like to address through projects. Mercy Corps, local partner(s) and/or a community group if already formed (see [section 4.3](#) Structures and Agreements) plan and facilitate an open community discussion and vetting process about the issues raised by the community. One goal of the workshop is for the community to come to an agreement about what their most critical issues are and which will be pursued through projects. By doing this, community members are creating a vision for their community. The action items from the workshop should include activities that will contribute to project design, such as discussions with key stakeholders outside the community as well as selection criteria for projects. Mercy Corps and partners should approve the criteria together. Choosing the actual projects is a later step.

Another goal of the workshop is to introduce participatory decision-making. Many communities may have been engaged by NGOs or CBOs in participatory appraisal or other assessment activities in the past. In many situations, results are shared with the community, but community members themselves are not involved in the process of analysis and issue selection. Even if some members of the community are experienced in participatory decision-making, there will likely be others for whom the whole concept is new. [Tool 12](#): Group Facilitation Manual gives detailed advice about several methods for helping communities have constructive consensus-building processes.



*Tip: The consensus-building workshop is an important stage at which to encourage the participation of women, minorities, and others who may not be fully part of decision-making culture in communities.*

- Invite individual women or minority leaders to attend consensus building workshops, project selection meetings, and CAG formation meetings (discussed in [section 4.3](#)).
- Encourage these leaders to discuss upcoming community gatherings among their family, friends, and groups to let people know what their participation involves and what the potential benefits are for themselves, their families, or their groups.
- If necessary, hold separate initial meetings with women and men or for different ethnic groups etc. in order for them to feel comfortable asking questions and expressing their ideas with Mercy Corps and local partner organizations.
- Discuss the benefits and down-sides of creating CAGs that are representative of the whole community versus a community having several CAGs, such as single gender or mono-ethnic groups. If the option of separate groups is chosen, honor this decision and invite representatives of each CAG to meet together to make community decisions.

## Project Selection

Facilitating the community to identify and prioritize possible projects is one of the most important tasks of a community mobilizer. There are several procedures for project prioritization. One approach is to extend the consensus-building workshop into project prioritization, which is possible in small communities or neighborhoods in urban contexts. More often, prioritization happens in a separate community meeting with a representative sampling of the whole community. Either way, prioritization follows the consensus-building process. The next section discusses the formation of community action groups (CAGs) to manage projects and many of the people involved in project selection may be part of CAGs.

Settling on a specific project should include discussion of the pros and cons of various options, based on criteria established through the consensus-building process. If, while discussing the options, community members realize that more information is needed in order to make a decision, the group can agree to how needed information will be collected and set another meeting for reviewing it before project selection. Mercy Corps, local partners and the people participating in the project selection process should decide a way to keep the larger community informed about the timeframe, process and actions taken by the group. Community notice boards or radio announcements are two methods often used.

Even if a priority project emerges quickly and there seems to be universal agreement about its selection, having the community vote or in some other way acknowledge agreement is important for accountability to the community. Again, [Tool 12](#) has several ideas for taking votes or the community may have a particular custom for voting.



*Tip: It is essential for the mobilizers supporting this process to: 1) know the exact criteria for the projects Mercy Corps is able to support in order to answer the communities' questions, and help them frame their projects; and 2) develop an effective group facilitation technique – all the traits required for PRA discussed above. Especially for the consensus-building workshop and project prioritization meeting, the mobilization team should collaborate before working with different communities or groups in order to help answer questions and help the mobilizers refine their messages.*

## Village Plans

Simple Action Plans help CAGs and others get started. [Tool 14](#) outlines the elements of these plans, including identifying project objectives, stating the major activities for meeting those objectives, and naming the responsible people or groups for moving the process forward.

At this stage or later into the process, it is also helpful to develop a Village Development Plan (VDP). VDPs are the result of an extensive process, often taking place over multiple meetings to articulate the community's development vision for itself. It can go beyond the scope of the current project(s) planned and even beyond the larger Mercy Corps mobilization program. The timeframe should be set by and appropriate for the community, but planning for at least one to two years helps people begin thinking longer-term while still encouraging action in the short-term. VDPs

can be road maps for the holistic development of villages' natural, social, and economic resources. [Tool 16](#) offers more advice for developing and using VDPs.

Simple Action Plans and short-term VDPs can contribute to long-term VDPs, which communities can create in coordination with a local government entity once they are confident in the mobilization process and ready to move toward being independent of Mercy Corps support (see [section 4.7: Handover](#)).<sup>10</sup> They should link to plans originally negotiated during pre-positioning and correlate directly with a government budgeting process if possible. There is no prescribed format for the process or final design of the long-term plan and program teams are encouraged to work with community partners on the most suitable formats and process.



*Tip: It can save time and effort to find out if the national government where the program is being implemented has already established village development plans or formats. This was the case in Sri Lanka and helped the team ensure that any additional documents drafted by the program or communities fed into Government of Sri Lanka village planning documents. The Sri Lanka team also warns that during VDP development, Mercy Corps must ensure that all stakeholders - CAGs, community interest groups, the general community, and government entities - know that the VDP is not a project or action plan for Mercy Corps. It is a plan developed by the community to guide their own future development activities. Mercy Corps programs can only help fulfill a limited part of VDPs.*

#### **VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PLANS CAN:**

- Establish the desired goals by sector and the areas to be addressed to achieve the well-being of the community in the mid- to long-term (three to five years);
- Provide information on the situation of the community; resources and assets available as determined by the PRA and community profile activities;
- Analyze the potential of the community to promote its own economic and social development;
- Formulate action steps to improve the delivery of services in such areas as in health, education, economic activity, basic infrastructure, roads, and communication sectors and other areas;
- Establish the priority and type of projects/activities that will contribute to achieve economic and social well-being of the community under a participatory and collaborative approach, where the community, the local governments, and relevant government entities have a good working relationship and interact permanently;
- Be developed in line with government development plans for the community and area/district/division/province; and
- Be developed according to the national government planning cycle.

Mercy Corps and CBO/NGO partners can support the preparation of VDPs with CAGs playing the leadership role. In many countries, government offices can be requested to provide the technical support to bring the plan in line with national or regional government requirements for development planning.

The final VDP should be presented and explained in detail to the community in a general meeting by the CAG and assisted by Mercy Corps and partner staff. Community validation/approval should be sought and CAG members should provide signed copies of the VDP to the community, Mercy Corps and the relevant government entities. If issues arise in the general meeting with the community and they are not prepared to approve the VDP, a process should be established to revise it and present the new plan and the technical officers supporting the process should be informed. The VDP should be reviewed with the government on a yearly basis by the CAG, community interest groups and community in general, in close collaboration and with the support of the Mercy Corps program team, and technical officers.

At the time when the CAG presents the VDP to the community, Mercy Corps can sponsor an activity to celebrate its delivery since it becomes one of the major achievements of the community and the mobilization program. Mercy Corps should assist in linking the CAG with local government officials and other development actors to help them achieve their VDP goals and objectives. For an example, see the well crafted VDP by a strategic planning group made up of community members and local and regional government officials, and supported by Mercy Corps-Mongolia.

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from the Community-based Development and Community-based Conflict Management Manual developed by Mercy Corps-Sri Lanka. 2008.

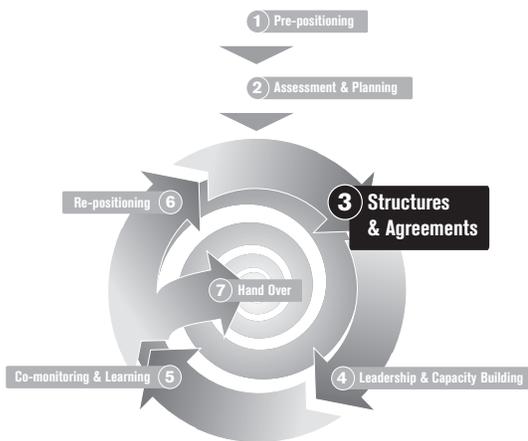
### 4.3 Structures and Agreements

To work effectively with a community throughout the duration of a program, it is important to identify who will be the leadership within the community and agree on documentation of expectations.

#### Formalizing Leadership Structures

A group or structure that can represent and provide leadership for the community is required for effective mobilization and part of community-led programming. This can happen through selection, election or creation. Assessing the existing structures, and whether or not any structures or individuals would be appropriate partners to play a leadership role in this program should have been conducted during pre-positioning. If the program requires creating a new structure, there are a number of tools to help with CAG formation, although working with existing leadership structures may be preferable. For specific advice, see [Tools 17-22](#).

In evaluations of community mobilization, one of the most often cited lessons or recommendations for future programming is the need to create clear division of roles and responsibilities among CAGs, Mercy Corps, Project Implementation Committees, Maintenance Committees, and other groups such as local government offices. The tools mentioned above can help ensure that all parties understand and are comfortable with the conditions of agreement before signing.



- Project Agreement with CAGs
- CAG and PIC Formation
- CAG Constitution
- Confirmation Meeting Format
- CAG Project Proposal
- CAG Conflict of Interest Statement
- Proposal Evaluation Form
- Employee Conflict of Interest Form
- Organizational Capacities Index (OCI) for CBOs and NGOs
- Project Approval Sheet
- Select Financial Policies

#### FORMATION OF COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS (CAGs) AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEES (PICs)

An essential element of community mobilization is a formal leadership structure to partner with Mercy Corps, which can speak and act on behalf of the community and which plays a visible leadership role in implementing and monitoring the project work. This structure then organizes a project committee to manage implementation of activities or an elected leadership committee to represent the community for a more broad based development plan. CAGs can also determine that a topical committee (such as a Health Committee or Water Committee) that focuses specifically on one technical area of the project is needed and select qualified community members to form a PIC. Or, as described below, the program can choose to work with one of the existing leadership structures.

Broadly inclusive membership in CAGs and PICs should be a priority. This will mean different things in each community. Some common access/inclusion factors to all communities include ensuring roles for women and men, persons with disabilities, youth and elders. It is also helpful to have members who are both directly and indirectly affected by projects as active members since they will offer different perspectives. If individual projects cover more than one village or area within a town/city, then CAG membership should include people from all locations or the project will risk excluding key stakeholders and neglecting the basic programming principles of participation, accountability, and transparency.

[See Tool 18.](#)

### Considerations for CAG Membership

- Eight to 15 members is a manageable size and allows for a great deal of diverse participation;
- The main local elected official may be part of the CAG, unless there is reason to believe she/he will be a hindrance to the decision-making process. If so, a separate role can be created so the leader has influence, but the process is free from their direct involvement;
- Municipal government, social or youth clubs, cooperatives, the main business sectors, and schools need to be represented;
- At least one person from the local private sector who understands the details of business development and associated laws/regulations should be included;
- All religious, ethnic, disability, and political groups in the community need to be represented;
- Special steps should be taken to encourage equal gender representation on CAGs;
- Specifically invite individuals with technical expertise relevant to the project (e.g. nurses for nutrition programs) to be part of the project, whether on the CAG or as local technical advisors.

### Signing Agreements

To formalize the partnership between Mercy Corps and a community (and often a local government entity), write down and sign agreements that state specifically what each partner commits to doing. These agreements become the reference for accountability and transparency, not to mention smooth collaboration. All too often leadership or situations change, and it is easy for verbal agreements to be misinterpreted by any of the parties, causing potential tension and mistrust. Signed, written agreements are also a good way to build institutional practice and the credibility of the CAG with the community. [Tool 17](#) outlines the elements of a good agreement between Mercy Corps and a CAG.



*Tip: In the case of infrastructure projects, a signed version of the community proposal can often serve as the necessary agreement. No matter what kind of project, there are usually agreements signed anytime money is to be disbursed, and again at every new tranche of funding.*

Each country has different laws about whether groups like CAGs can and should be officially registered. For example, in Georgia, CAGs can be legally registered as non-commercial/non-governmental entities or remain unregistered as a formal group. Some CAGs see benefits in registration, such as if they are interested in eventually becoming a CBO or NGO. Others see benefit in not being registered, as there is often a fee associated with maintaining registration. Different possibilities exist in other countries.

### Community Contribution

Every Mercy Corps mobilization program and many mobilization activities require some element of community investment, as concrete evidence of the community's commitment and the value they attribute to the project. Community contributions should always be included in the written agreement with Mercy Corps. Ranging



Photo: Mongolia, Thatcher Cook for Mercy Corps, 2001

In **Serbia's** Community Revitalization Through Democratic Action (CRDA) program the community matching contribution was 42 percent of total project cost, significantly higher than the 25 percent minimum specified in the cooperative agreement. Beneficiaries and clients far exceeded budgeted requirements for matching documentation and this percentage includes only documented, approved match; the actual physical and financial contributions to the projects are therefore considerably higher as some match was improperly documented or simply not prepared and submitted. The program team felt that the high levels of match represented the trust and reputation that Mercy Corps and the CAGs developed by honoring program agreements. It also represents increasing capacity, resourcefulness, and confidence of communities. For more information about this program see [Chapter 5](#) and [Annex 6](#)

from five to 40 percent of the total project budget, community contributions can take the form of cash, labor or in-kind items. In some cases, the time of CAG members has been included. Ideally the percentage of contribution will increase with each subsequent project implemented in that community as part of the community taking increased leadership and moving toward financial independence for their development goals.

### Mercy Corps Procedures and Policies

One of a community mobilizer's main jobs is to understand and explain clearly the policies and procedures of Mercy Corps to the community, so that they are able to support the process and avoid confusion or delays. Delays are the most common "trust breaker" between Mercy Corps and communities. When procurement or logistics are not done properly it can cause the project to temporarily shut down, quickly eroding the motivation of the community and the relationships that mobilizers work so hard to create. Mobilization teams are responsible for designing an effective process, based in Mercy Corps procedures, and then working with the community to implement it. [Tool 28](#) has select financial tools developed by past community mobilization programs. Mercy Corps' [PALM](#) and [Sub-grant](#) manuals cover many of the details for procedures and policies relevant for mobilization programs.

### REMEMBER DONOR PARAMETERS, COUNTRY PLANS AND REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Another level of accountability is between Mercy Corps and program donors. In most cases, mobilization programs have specific parameters established by donors for implementation and reporting. Examples of program elements often specified by donors include: sector or project type, geographic scope, timeframe, average project size, and results targets. It is the responsibility of program managers to know cooperative agreements, accepted proposals, and program descriptions and to help program teams and partners make decisions that meet the agreements that govern the program. Knowing donor policies and program agreements is also important if circumstances in the context change and Mercy Corps decides there is need to negotiate amendments to original agreements.

Programs are also part of the larger context of Mercy Corps' work in a country and a region. The agency-wide annual planning process attempts to take into account the expected contributions and support needs of individual programs. Program managers should consult regularly with country and regional leadership to ensure activities are advancing these goals. The nature of community mobilization – working with communities to identify priority issues – is also a good way for Mercy Corps to learn about emerging needs and trends that should be taken into account in future country and regional planning processes.



*Tip: There are a number of reasons that the CAG structure can be difficult and many relate to tensions in the larger community. A few strategies for managing such tensions include:*

- *Be sure all community members understand the CAG selection process by ensuring it is communicated in multiple ways – written in program pamphlets and local newspapers, aired on community radio or TV, posted on community message boards and discussed in person.*
- *Use relationship mapping and other activities from assessment to understand community dynamics, including among key individuals. These are also useful tools for finding out the credibility of the community leaders with groups within the community.*
- *If separate CAGs are formed in communities where sub-populations do not work well together, continue to work with each group separately until a joint committee can be formed.*
- *Use cross-visits to demonstrate to communities skeptical about working together or having difficulty reaching decisions how others in similar communities have overcome these types of difficulties.*

*In most circumstances, Mercy Corps program teams have found that differing community groups each place enough value on projects that they are eventually willing to collaborate. More guidance for managing inter-group tensions as well as community mobilization in conflict contexts can be found in [Annex 2](#).*

### 4.4 Leadership and Capacity Building

With sustained mobilization as the end goal of all Mercy Corps' engagement with communities, every mobilization program, and every program using mobilization methods, involves leadership and capacity building.

Capacity building is a process with at least four components: demonstration, training, mentoring, and technical assistance. Formal training may actually constitute only a small percentage of the effort needed to help a participant internalize new concepts, adjust attitudes, develop skills, and apply them independently and in a sustainable way (see figure 4).

**Demonstration** involves showing what is possible, either through Mercy Corps staff or partners modeling behavior or by exposing community members to processes that perform at the desired standard. This helps community members create a vision of what is possible and expected, develop a shared experience of the goal, and generate enthusiasm and commitment for bringing it about in their own context. Cross-visits between communities are a good way to demonstrate the concept of mobilization, how CAGs function, and how projects are implemented (cross-visits are further discussed in [section 4.5](#)).

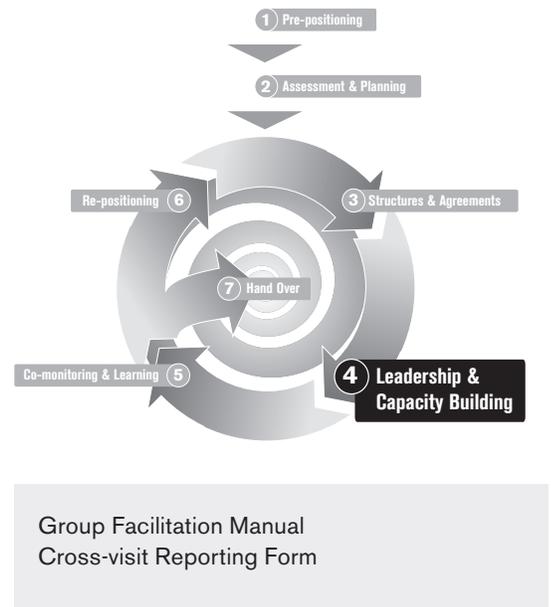
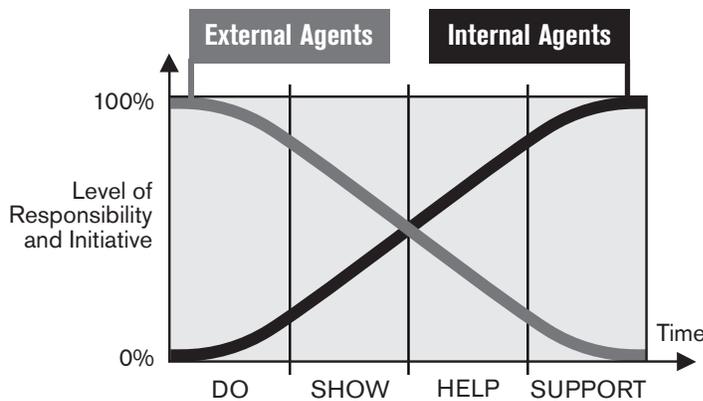


Figure 4. Key Stages in the Capacity Building Process



**Training** is the focused and systematic process of helping participants develop the skills or awareness necessary for a given task. For training to be most effective, it is best if participants discover, through experiential activities, the principles that they need to understand. Learning is cemented when participants have the opportunity to practice newly acquired knowledge or skills, apply them in practical settings, assess their own attitudes, and reflect the experience.

Training topics should be tailored to the existing skills and needs of groups and program objectives. For PICs, the focus of training can be very technical, such as engineering skills for sanitation construction projects. Often it is the role of the Mercy Corps team to help arrange the training by an outside technical advisor or design and deliver a training themselves. For CAGs and local NGO partners, a number of project management and general leadership training curricula have been developed by Mercy Corps programs and can be adapted to new programs. Examples include: project management, basic supervision, facilitation, advocacy, and negotiation and communication (see [Annex 1](#)).

Most often the trainings will be related to the ongoing program implementation and how to administer the project. Trainings are regularly needed in the following areas:

- Proposal writing, budgeting, financial tracking and accounting;
- Management and strategic leadership;
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting;
- Local government regulations;
- Public relations, networking and advocacy.

In **Zimbabwe**, one program found that continued training and capacity development for CAGs significantly contributed to members being effective at serving children and providing for their needs, the goal of a mobilization program. They noted that conducting regular trainings and shorter “refresher” trainings to keep skills fresh was particularly important considering the high rate of turnover of elected government officials. To help programming stay consistent, all training sessions throughout the multi-year program were conducted for the current executive officials as well as other members of the CAG. The team notes that this practice has ensured that essential skills are built in a broad base of individuals and has provided continuity for program support in a changing political climate. More information on this case is in [section 3.4](#).

Techniques that focus on experiential learning for specific application are essential in training design. For mobilizers with less training experience, practice with colleagues by role-playing the training prior to delivery will help smooth out the techniques.

**Mentoring** is arguably the most important part of capacity building and leadership development, yet is also the most often neglected activity because it is so specific to the context and individual needs. Mentoring helps people apply newly acquired knowledge and skills, overcome any potential obstacles, and develop confidence while receiving support to perform effectively. In community mobilization, mentoring is a relationship in which someone with more experience doing mobilization (the mentor) acts as a guide, role model, coach, and sponsor to someone newly learning the approach (the mentee).

This does not mean that the mentee lacks valuable technical, leadership or other experience to lend, just that they are newer to mobilization. In many situations, mentees can also act as mentors on different issues. An example is a CAG member who has a great deal of knowledge about construction, but little knowledge about facilitating a consensus-building workshop. She might mentor other community members during skills trainings, offering useful knowledge and insights from her experience, and then receive mentoring by a Mercy Corps mobilizer for facilitation skills.

Mentoring relationships can be formal, involving the creation of an agreement to focus on a particular skill or set of skills. This involves consistent communication to enable the mentor to check in with the mentee regularly (once a week / month / quarter) about progress. It can also be a casual relationship of ongoing support with occasional advice and ad hoc meetings. Good mentors also listen, affirm, counsel, and encourage mentees to develop mobilization skills, expertise, and/or direction.

**Technical Assistance** involves the periodic support of experts (often not locally available) and who can help communities resolve problems or undertake a task. Examples include urban planners helping with a slum upgrading project; public health advisors working with communities to plan vaccination campaigns; civil engineers training local laborers about digging and maintaining irrigation canals; or conflict management experts facilitating inter-ethnic dialogue sessions as part of mobilization programs with reconciliation objectives. It is not always necessary or appropriate for technical assistance to involve the transfer of skills, such as in the case of building a community radio tower that a company will maintain and not the community itself. If, however, the community will be responsible for maintenance, time and resources must be built into the program for the technical experts to also train community members. See [section 4.7](#) for more information about developing Maintenance Committees for infrastructure projects.



Photo: Kosovo, David Snyder for Mercy Corps, 2007



*Tip: One way to build the technical capacity of Mercy Corps mobilization staff is to include them on assessment and new program design teams. They often offer fresh perspectives that can influence creative programming. It also gives them a hands-on way to strengthen their skills set for implementing mobilization programs that may be prioritized by communities.*

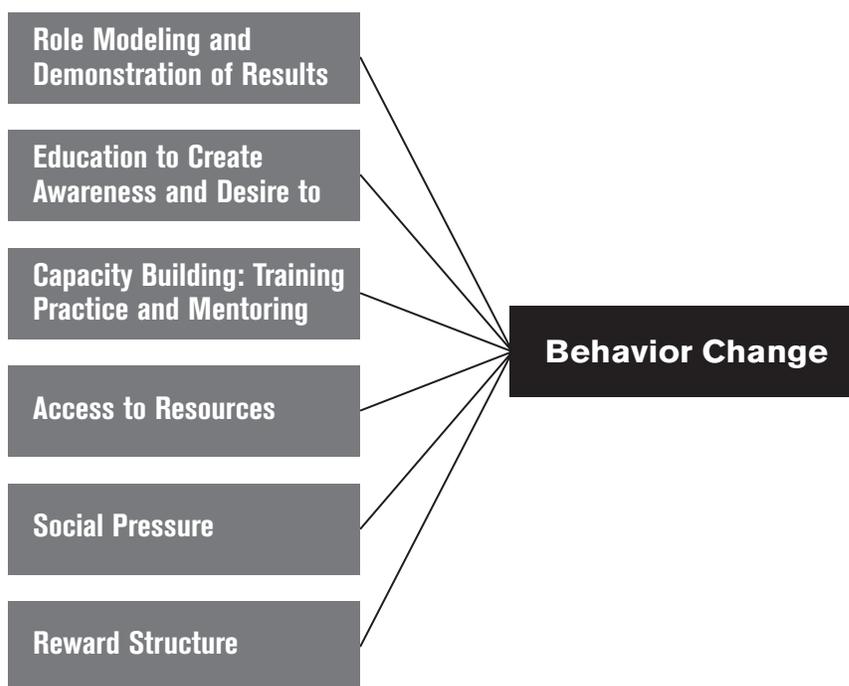
Demonstration, training, mentoring, and technical assistance are part of any good development programming and especially relevant to community mobilization, where the goal is capacity-building for community leadership and sustained mobilization. A systematic framework for mentoring, training in increasingly advanced topics, and application opportunities must be a tailor-made part of the mobilization strategy. It requires a balanced understanding of community capacity, and may require some mentoring skills development for the community mobilizer. With the goal of progressively and sustainably transferring responsibility from Mercy Corps to individuals or groups within communities, those groups must show during the course of the program that they are able to replicate the demonstrated behaviors independently and adapt them within their own environment.

### Behavioral Change Framework

Many community mobilization programs emphasize behavior change as a goal, but this rarely happens accidentally or simply by exposing target audiences to information or training. Instead, Mercy Corps program teams, CAGs and other partners need to understand the multiple components of the behavior change process.

**Figure 5. Determinants of Behavior Change**

To achieve sustainable behavior change, all of these factors must be systematically addressed.<sup>11</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Positive Deviance is another methodological resource to draw from, in particular when designing awareness or behavior change campaigns. Positive Deviance (PD) is a development approach that is based on the premise that solutions to community problems already exist within the community. The positive deviance approach thus differs from traditional “needs based” or problem-solving approaches in that it does not focus primarily on identification of needs and the external inputs necessary to meet those needs or solve problems. Instead it seeks to identify and optimize existing resources and solutions within the community to solve community problems.

### Awareness Campaigns or Issue Socialization

While capacity building often focuses on leadership and CAGs, community mobilization programs and activities employ other methods to reach the larger community. Awareness campaigns and issue socializations offer an opportunity to demonstrate behaviors to large groups of people. In-person awareness-raising can happen at market days or special gatherings, such as hand-washing demonstrations Mercy Corps teams conducted in Niger accompanied by information about how diseases spread. The media can also broadcast messages about critical issues within the community. For example, public service announcements or on-air dramas via community radio started in Liberia through a community mobilization program are still spreading messages about combating gender-based violence and building the capacity of parents to talk with their children about preventing abuse. All these efforts contribute to behavior change.

In **Mongolia**, one community project focused on increasing community awareness about management of a national school lunch program that had been recently created by the Government of Mongolia. A group in one area was concerned about inefficient use of funds and the quality of products supplied to children and the project set out to involve parents, teachers, and children in monitoring school lunches. The project team – led by the Scouts Association in partnership with other elected community members – monitored the program at four schools. They looked at the approved budgets, interviewed government officials, and conducted focus group discussions with teachers, children and parents. They also operated a telephone “hot line” to receive views and opinions from the public. Several problems were identified, such as budget discrepancies, non-observance of safety standards, and the lack of a competitive process for hiring food companies. Government agencies joined some monitoring visits.

Parents, children, and the general public were informed about the activities of the project through programs produced by the local TV station and a nationally-broadcast station. The monthly issues of a CSO-published newspaper covered the story often. The circulation of the paper and range of the TV broadcast meant that many people beyond the project area were aware of the initiative, learned what they could do about school lunch quality in their own communities and offered a model of community-led monitoring of government budgets on any topic.



*Tip: Some of Mercy Corps' Staff Development and Leadership materials may be useful capacity building with CAGs, CBOs and NGOs.*

## 4.5 Monitoring and Learning

Every program should have a rigorous monitoring and evaluation element that 1) provides information to people to enable them to make decisions, 2) tracks progress on indicator targets, and 3) facilitates learning. Through community mobilization, community members can have direct involvement in monitoring, reflecting on community projects, on themselves as leaders of those projects, and on fellow project partners. Participatory community mobilization M&E tools and methods are increasingly recognized as effective means of creating mutual accountability among communities and government, CBO/NGO partners, and Mercy Corps. They can also be useful in building a spirit of ongoing learning and reflection that supports the development of community capacity. Finally, a commitment to monitoring and learning can help community leaders refine communication skills and expertise important for generating future support.

The mobilization process should include community members in identification of critical indicators for measuring project success. It can be very helpful to let community members work with program staff to identify the indicators of success that are meaningful to them, and to discuss the means of measurement. At a minimum, CAGs should be made aware of monitoring processes and evaluation criteria, so they can know what to expect and help identify opportunities for their participation. This is also an opportunity for capacity building.

[Annex 6](#) provides a sample list of indicators and a logframe relevant for community mobilization. Mercy Corps' toolkit, [DM&E-In-A-Box](#), includes a series of Tips Sheets for project start-up, implementation, participatory monitoring and evaluation, and examples of mobilization programs and activities. In particular, see DM&E Tip Sheet #14 for more information on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation.

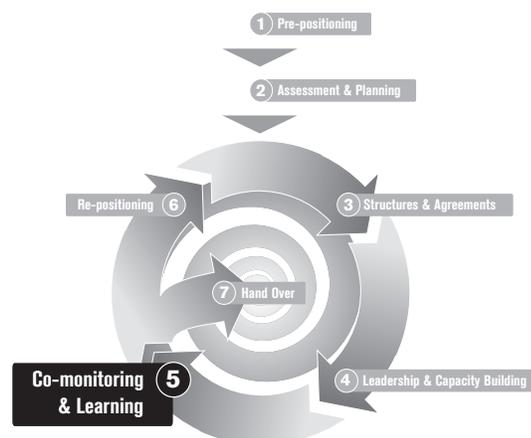
The list below offers a few ways to involve CAGs and the wider community in monitoring and learning processes.

### Capacity Indices

Capacity Indices help show in which skills groups are strong and where they need development. They are also effective monitoring tools, helping Mercy Corps target groups' specific capacity building needs, as discussed in [section 4.4](#).

The Organizational Capacity Index (OCI), see [Tools 25 \(CBOs\) and 26 \(NGOs\)](#), measures five organizational capacities in partner organizations.

- Financial Resource Management: accountability, operational planning, and budgeting
- Human Resources Management: personnel management, staff development, and staff participation
- Strategic Leadership/Management: strategic planning, good governance, sustainability, and resource mobilization
- Information Systems: monitoring and evaluation, reporting, and organizational learning
- External Relationships: public relations, networking, stakeholder input (participation), and advocacy



Mobilizer's Monitoring Form  
 CAG Impact Form  
 CAG Monitoring Form  
 Cross-visit Reporting Form  
 Empowerment Impacts Guide and Form  
 Strategic Monitoring Form  
 CAG Questionnaire  
 Project Scoring Sheet  
 Indicator Menu for CAG Project Impact

**Monitoring:** Regularly collecting, reviewing, reporting and acting on information about project implementation. Monitoring is generally used to check our performance against 'targets' as well as to ensure compliance with donor regulations. (Mercy Corps DM&E Guidelines).

The OCI asks value neutral (objective) questions that focus on accepted or standard organizational practices and systems, which, if in place, should ideally set the CBO/NGO on a healthy, sustainable track. The OCI does not, therefore, judge a CBO's performance in terms of quality, as assessors may use too much subjectivity in their analysis. The true quality of a CBO/NGO's work performance will be measured in terms of their ability to advance conflict transformation, good governance, and sustainable social and economic development processes in their communities.

The results of the initial use of the tool can form the baseline data for each CBO/NGO's starting organizational capacity in each of the five areas and can be the foundation for developing capacity building plan for each CBO/NGO to address their specific weaknesses. The scores are indicative while the answers to the OCI questions are specific.

In order to improve CBO/NGO staff understanding of capacity index dimensions and indices scores, many program teams hold feedback sessions in which the results as well as process of determining the scores are shared with the organizations. These sessions allow time for CBO/NGO staff to discuss with Mercy Corps and partners about the skills they most want to develop for their long-term goals action planning for how to do so. CAG members should also be involved in this process and share the results with the wider community for transparency. See [Annex 7](#) for a helpful guide for facilitating community feedback sessions.

As part of capacity-building plans, the Mercy Corps and CBO/NGO partners can determine a regular schedule for repeating the capacity index scoring process to help them track their progress as well as build analytical and reflection capacity. Regular progress reports to communities can also contribute to community members' confidence in these local groups.

The **Mercy Corps-Guatemala** team, a partner CSO and community groups implementing a training, advocacy and networking program found the self diagnosis process a fundamental step in improving the quality of administrative, technical, and financial procedures. Their recommendation was to follow up with each CSO or group soon after the capacity index to initiate strategic planning and to revisit the plans at regular intervals.



*Tip: Conducting a capacity index assessment of CBOs and NGOs together with the CAG (or a sub-set of community members who require services from a CBO, NGO or government office or agency) is a great way to engage these groups in the overall activities of the program and to build awareness. Involving communities in the development or adaptation of the index prior to assessment also builds their skills and understanding.*

### Self or Peer Monitoring

Monitoring is much more than data collection! While most of a given program's monitoring resources are used to collect data, those efforts are incomplete unless the results are reviewed, reported – even informally – and used in project management and decision-making. The process of monitoring and evaluating a program should be accomplished by a collaboration between the community mobilizers, who are best positioned to use the results to prepare the next phase of program planning, and the M&E unit, since they track indicators over time and across programs.

In self and peer monitoring, the community conducts the M&E activities and both the community and Mercy Corps can use the data for future planning. These monitoring activities are ideally a sub-set of the complete data that Mercy Corps must monitor for donor requirements and for internal learning. This community involvement creates opportunities for them to learn about the progress made through the program, build important learning skills, and create structures for accountability and quality.



*Tip: Programs have also experimented with “cross-monitoring” models. In a multi-community program, one community might be responsible for monitoring another community, which in turn monitors yet another community until all are matched.*

## Networking

Networking is one of the main forms of learning cited by CAG members around the world. Networks and alliances are invaluable because they create structures for organizations and individuals to share ownership of common goals, provide forums for exchanging information and ideas, and also give people experiencing similar processes important moral support. Networks established during mobilization programs enable groups of any size to reach out to others with similar or complementary goals, promote their profile, and expand their reach, in the case of CAGs, or their constituencies in the case of CBO/NGOs.<sup>12</sup>

On an individual level or for small groups of CAGs, networks offer a way to exchange timely news and information, informally monitor each other's mobilization projects, and learn from each other's experience. Through advocacy, larger networks of CAGs, CSOs and/or NGOs can engage in dialogue with government and other influential leaders on a broad range of issues affecting their communities, such as in the example from Iraq below.

**To determine the goal of the network, the following question help guide the process:**<sup>13</sup>

- *What is the purpose of this network?*
- *Who are the members?*
- *Who is the target group? Who will benefit from the activities of the network?*
- *What are the benefits of this network for constituencies?*
- *What will the partners gain?*
- *How will the network help build the individual organizations?*
- *What skills will the partners contribute and what skills will they learn?*
- *Will the network achieve power to influence change?*
- *What can be saved by joining together (e.g. time, energy, funds)?*

## Questions to consider when forming a network

- *Formal Documentation – will the network become a legal, independent body that requires legal documents? Do the partners want to draw up some sort of formal agreement or letter of understanding that outlines the limits and objectives of the network?*
- *Written values, priorities and principles – will there be a document drawn up that outlines the values, priorities and principles of the network, something that the partners will agree to or “sign on” to join the network?*
- *Leadership – will the network require permanent organizational structure? How will those decisions be made?*

Networking is a major part of the **Iraq** Community Assistance Program's (CAP I-III) work with people with disabilities (PWD). Mercy Corps trained CAGs, CBOs and NGOs in mobilization approaches and supported their development of a nation-wide network of PWD groups. The network, the Iraqi Alliance of Disability Organizations, created its constitution through a collaborative, transparent and accountable process and is now officially recognized by the government of Iraq. The training and exchange of ideas among network members has given them the tools they need to work with local leaders of the PWD community in every corner of Iraq. Together they are mobilizing communities for disability rights, including hundreds of school age children in many communities.

The Alliance is a landmark mechanism facilitating advocacy at both the local and national level. By drafting new legislation for local government entities and coordinating with communities in advocacy, the group is facilitating real community-level results that contribute to Iraq realizing national level policy advances for PWDs. Among the general public, the Alliance's efforts are raising awareness about access and rights issues long ignored in Iraq. Many of the members reflect that before they were part of the network they were not sure the impact their localized efforts were having. Now they get energy from each other to continue their local work as well as collaborate regionally and nationally.

<sup>12</sup> [Section 3.3](#) highlights lessons from Mongolia implementing the Training, Advocacy and Networking for Stronger NGO Sectors (TAN) program, which also operated in Guatemala.

<sup>13</sup> Adapted from the LINCS program “Networking and Coalition Building Grant Toolkit for Trainers” developed by Mercy Corps-Sudan. 2008.

### Cross-Visit

One of the most effective ways to learn a new technique or technical approach is to observe its use, witness the impacts, and have access to people who have experiences to share. Mercy Corps mobilization programs have consistently helped CAGs and other community leaders visit other successful communities for these purposes. Whether a few miles down the road or half a world away, cross-visits can be a powerful learning experience.



Photo: Iraq, Cassandra Nelson/Mercy Corps, 2003

### Community Competitions

Another tool for peer monitoring is to have neighboring communities act as judges for internal competitions regarding the program. For example, in an Indonesia program neighboring community members visited to judge the t-shirts and banners a program community had created for a health awareness campaign. A similar approach was utilized in Bosnia with area judges investigating the construction quality of small infrastructure projects. Such competitions encourage communities to learn from each other and demonstrate the benefits of mobilization to their neighbors, as well as to have fun. Programs must make judging criteria explicit and clear.

Expecting visitors from other communities can also provide a strong motivation to keep up momentum on activities and produce results. A good technique is to set up regular cross-visits among communities. This gives each community the opportunity to see the progress in neighboring communities and track progress with more objective eyes. It is also a built-in time for joint reflection about lessons learned, challenges, resources, success stories and ideas for collaboration or innovation.

Cross-visits can also be set up between communities of different Mercy Corps programs if there are relevant learning opportunities. In some cases it is beneficial for countries within regions to visit mobilization programs in neighboring countries, or even across regions to get different perspectives. The Training, Advocacy and Networking Program, for example, facilitated community leaders from **Guatemala** and **Mongolia** to visit each other's project sites and share lessons from similar mobilization approaches in very different contexts. [Tool 29](#) is a set of ideas for planning successful cross-visits.

### Recording Learning

Learning documents range broadly in scope from field studies to journal articles, from lessons learned to briefing papers. Within Mercy Corps, sharing learning documents from community mobilization programs or among project sites is helpful for understanding the program dynamics for better decision-making and to build on successful models. For colleagues outside Mercy Corps, recording lessons learned is an opportunity to contribute to communities of practice and scholarship, influence policy makers with advice grounded in field experience and raise Mercy Corps' profile with partners and donors.

Recording successes and learning also helps demonstrate the benefits of mobilization to other communities and generate interest in the process. For example, CAG members and others can help identify success stories from community mobilization projects. The process of investigating success stories or where they might be found always reveals something interesting – a prospective opportunity, a lesson learned for next time, a life changed. By writing the successes down, or recording them by audio, film or video, mobilizers can create a way to share their work with others. Many programs have also incorporated mini-success stories into regular project or program newsletters that are shared with the community and others.

### Community Feedback

For community members' learning and analytical capacity, program teams should create time for regular feedback of information, data, findings, and results generated by both individual community projects and the overall mobilization program. Mercy Corps Sri Lanka utilizes an Annual Results Review process to present data to communities for discussion and feedback (see link in [Annex 7](#)). Another format is the Public Audit process required by many

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donors and now some government ministries, such as the Ministry of Social Welfare in Nepal. In a Public Audit, Mercy Corps staff present all pertinent program details, including budgets, objectives, and results thus far. This is a useful tool for transparency and trust-building between communities and Mercy Corps.

#### **USING CELL PHONES AND FIELD DIARIES TO DOCUMENT STORIES**

When a community member is describing a success or giving a project update, ask permission and use your phone to record what they are saying by taking a video, a picture or making notes that can be sent via text message to other stakeholders in real time. For other ideas for using new media as part of community mobilization, see [Annex 3](#).

Another informal way of recording learning is for mobilizers to keep a diary of field visits. The simple act of writing helps with remembering details. Diaries are not official notes, but observations and reflections that help mobilizers sort out questions about community dynamics or better understand subtle changes that may not otherwise be noticeable.

## 4.6 Re-positioning

In multi-cycle mobilization programs, when communities have successfully completed a project and the program will continue to support the community, there are many decisions to be made. Priorities should be reconfirmed or reassessed, agreements revisited, and new project plans created. Additionally Mercy Corps and partner organizations work with CAGs to take on increased responsibility and leadership for all aspects of projects and with communities to increase their level of contribution. This can also be the time to revisit levels of participation among all stakeholder groups and create ways for those who have not been involved or which had smaller roles in the last cycle to increase their participation.

Many of the tools and activities relevant for this section are included in [section 4.1: Pre-Positioning](#). Some of the unique activities of this re-positioning phase are below.

### Project Completion Celebration

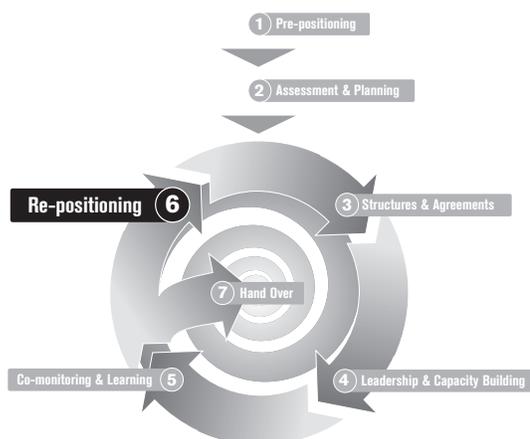
When the objectives of a community project are completed and Mercy Corps has signed off on the CAG Project Completion Form ([Tool 30](#)), it is time to celebrate! The CAG, with Mercy Corps, partners, local government officials, and all stakeholder groups should choose a date, location and program that honors the achievements made, gives credit to those leading the process, and looks forward to future collaboration. This can take the form of a feast and speeches, commemorative tree planting, orchestrated cultural dancing, or any event that reflects what is unique about the community.

### Preparation for the Next Phase

Within a community mobilization program, it is anticipated that multiple projects will be completed, with increasing community leadership and resource contribution with each subsequent project. As one project is wrapping up, CAGs, Mercy Corps and partners should meet to discuss purposes, roles and responsibilities going forward. At minimum, this involves reconfirming agreements:

- Review the existing agreement with current partners/community;
- Revisit community action plans/visions, adjust according to previous projects accomplished, new needs/priorities, etc.;
- Explain the (new) program – e.g. program scaling down, totally new program;
- Define roles and responsibilities;
- Review all the activities completed against remaining ones, and incorporate any outstanding activities into a revised workplan; and
- Establish the maintenance mechanism.

This is also the moment to revisit plans for eventual handover of leadership to the community.



PRA Sample Tools  
CAG Final Project Report Form  
Media and Communication Guide



Photo: India, Sanjay Gurung/Mercy Corps, 2006

## Expansion/Scaling-up

Another option for re-positioning is to take a successful community project and expand it to many more communities or “scale-up” within the same community to increase the number of people who can benefit. This was the model chosen by a Mercy Corps-Zimbabwe team for greater support to the increasing orphans and vulnerable children population (see the impact example in [section 3.4](#)). When expanding to new communities, it is necessary to initiate the mobilization phases outlined in [section 4.1](#): Re-positioning.

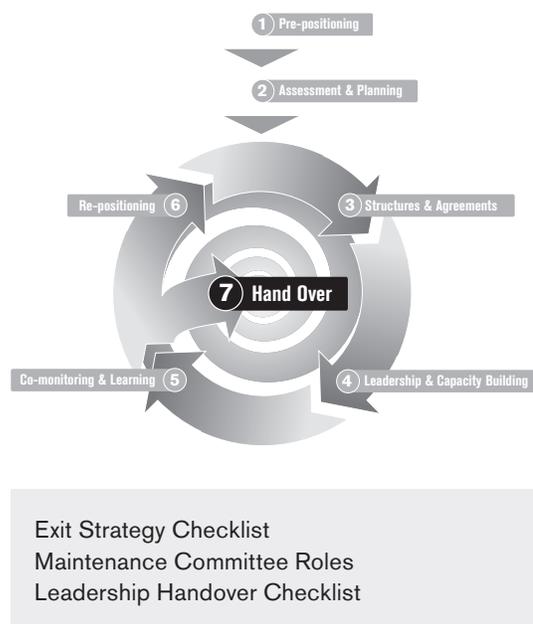


*Tip: Think creatively about ways to encourage CAGs or CBO/NGOs to plan for sustainability as they consider expanding their efforts. For example, if the group requires a physical office or meeting space, are there other groups with which they could share space and the related expenses of rent, electricity, and equipment? Or for mobilization events in the community, are there ways to plan together to have events on the same day in order to get the maximum number of people participating? Groups in many countries have found that such cooperation can spark new opportunities for collaboration and uncover inter-connected issues of concern to many community groups.*

## 4.7 Handover

When a community moves beyond the expectations of the program, CAGs are promoting participation, accountability and transparency, and mobilizing community members to carry out far more than planned with their projects, it is likely time for Mercy Corps presence in the community to end. For more attributes of mobilized communities see [Table 1](#): Levels of Community Mobilization.

The process of leaving must be very thoughtful. In order for community mobilization programs to be sustainable, handover processes should have been discussed by the Mercy Corps program team and partner CBOs/NGOs during pre-positioning and with CAGs and other stakeholders at the initial agreement phase when establishing roles and responsibilities. The process should also be discussed during all subsequent re-positioning phases to ensure expectations and timeframes are understood and all partners can work toward them together. By being upfront about the eventual goal of handover and checking in about it frequently the actual transition will be less daunting for all involved and more of a natural progression.



### Exit Strategy

An exit strategy is the detailed plan for implementing handovers. Developing an exit strategy means defining the elements of the program that should continue after Mercy Corps leaves and which stakeholders will maintain them. Often it involves a plan for relationship and capacity building with those stakeholders to ensure they are ready to take over this vital role at the end of the program. [Tool 40](#) is a checklist of things to consider when planning exit strategies, including:

- Ownership and maintenance of infrastructure built, including replacement of all project assets involving physical structures, equipment, and utilities;
- Sustainability of services or activities developed or strengthened, in order to maintain the trust in the CAG, PIC, and other responsible groups;
- Ongoing process of revising community action plans as new projects are envisioned, implemented and completed in order to keep the momentum built during the program; and
- Explicit guidelines for community leadership and coordination of the above three ongoing processes – maintenance, services and planning – so that the democratic process continues.



*Tip: When crafting exit strategies, it can be helpful to remember:*

**Original program objectives.** For example, if recovery is an objective, it is important to be clear from the outset what this means by the term. Recovery can be a return to the same degree of food or livelihood security experienced before the intervention, or to an improved capacity to cope.

**Consider creating a draft exit strategy at project inception.** Many programs report that a late start risks poor results and less likelihood of sustainability for the exit strategy.

**Map out a strategy for the development of local partnerships** to facilitate the shift to longer-term programming when the agency leaves. For example, develop strong links between traditional leaders and CAG members to continue support to families or individuals affected by the project. Government agencies can agree to continue technical advice after handover. This can also be part of long-term village development plans discussed in [section 4.2](#).

**Be coordinated.** It is important to coordinate with others and not implement exit strategies in isolation. Government agencies and non-government groups can analyze together what activities become less important over time, how to phase out activities or projects, or to shift focus to addressing new priorities.

## Maintenance Committees

For small scale infrastructure projects, Maintenance Committees are a common element of a successful exit strategy. They ensure that physical infrastructure projects do not go neglected and fall apart after Mercy Corps leaves the community. These committees can be organized just for the purpose of maintaining the village water system, the roads and pathways, the community center, or any number of projects started during the program. This could be a role CAGs or PICs take on at the end of the program. Either way, a group and system should be established and committed to the sustainability of the project and/or behavior change per the program objectives. Maintenance groups usually involve some element of dues collection from the community for their activities and are expected to stay active for several years following the close of the project.

### SO HOW ARE THE PROJECTS DOING AFTER A COUPLE YEARS?

The 2007 Sustainability Field Study, which looked at two programs in Central Asia three to five years after the handover of program leadership to communities, found several important features regarding the long-term maintenance and use of infrastructure. The report states that continued maintenance and use of infrastructure “serves as an indicator of the level of continued accountability and collective action that exists. Responsible parties are held accountable for care and for mobilization of resources when repairs or maintenance are required. In total, 94 infrastructure projects were reviewed in the 51 sample communities, and 87 (93 percent) were reported as still functional and in active use by the community. The team directly assessed the overall condition of 81 of the infrastructure projects and determined that 68 percent were in good to excellent condition. Schools, roads and electrification projects fared very well, with all of these projects operational at the time of the study.” One of the recommendations of the study focused on the need for the careful design of maintenance systems for infrastructure in communities where there were not established or traditional systems for maintenance. More information about this study can be found in [section 5.3](#).

## Handover of Leadership

All programs should establish a very clear date in which the leadership is shifted from Mercy Corps to a CBO/NGO, CAG, or other group. When the time comes, it is helpful to make an event of the handover in order to be clear that the community is taking full ownership and to celebrate the community’s achievements. Advice on successful handovers from experienced teams includes:

- Ensure community mobilization process has involved a full compliance check before the handover;
- Coordinate the handover between Mercy Corps and the existing CAG, PIC, Maintenance Committee, community at large, local government, higher level government, NGO and/or private sector partners;
- Acknowledge and appreciate groups and individuals in the form of certificates. Hand over any documents that ever developed along the project time, including maps of project location, pictures, video, etc., and/or signing agreements between partners;
- Produce clear handover notes or agreements, including who is responsible for maintenance and a clear declaration of ownership of project assets. Be careful to avoid one or two influential individuals from taking ownership by default.
- Follow up with stakeholders. Inform higher level government and other relevant stakeholders to ensure they are aware of the handover. Even if the community project/program leadership did not have the relations established with the higher level government at the initial stage of project/program, it is still necessary to inform them to ensure sustainability of program as per program target.
- Celebrate! Invite everyone who may have been involved or benefited, directly or indirectly, from the program and projects in order to bring closure and embrace a new phase of community-led development.

## Plans for Post Program Evaluation

In addition to the many outputs and outcomes achieved during mobilization programs and activities, community mobilization's ultimate success is arguably best measured in the long-term impact of communities themselves. Before Mercy Corps fulfills partnership with a community, plans should be put in place if there are program targets that should be measured one, three, five or more years after the leadership transition. If so, plans for a follow-up study should be outlined at this stage and timelines set for revisiting the process.

For example, that a microfinance program will result in successful businesses may not be demonstrated immediately following a project/program, and would require a post-program evaluation at a later time to truly measure the results. Similarly, a breastfeeding program claiming to have benefits for toddler nutrition rates may need a return visit to measure the health of the children who benefited from the program.

Data for these post-program evaluations can either be collected by an external evaluation team, a returning team from Mercy Corps or, ideally, by members of the community leadership or partners who would then send the information back to Mercy Corps. Capacity building for long-term monitoring and evaluation is thus an essential component of the community mobilization implementation process.



*Tip: Funding post-program evaluations can be challenging since they often take place after Mercy Corps' relationship with a donor has ended. Some donors will support such studies if they are budgeted for in new proposals, so do inquire with donors when designing mobilization programs. Another option is to apply for specific evaluation grants. Mercy Corps has some experience being awarded foundation funding for post-program evaluations. Country teams can also seek headquarters support to conduct evaluations or for funds to hire external consultants. To explore options, contact the [Strategy and Learning](#) or [DM&E teams](#).*

## 5. Mercy Corps' Community Mobilization Experience and Resources

### 5.1 The Evolution of Community Mobilization's Role in Mercy Corps' Strategic Vision

Today, community mobilization is a common term at Mercy Corps. In the past decade, the organization has implemented programs using mobilization techniques in at least 35 countries, totaling over US\$300 million of investments in this approach. How did this core competency claim its central role for Mercy Corps' mission in societies in transition?

#### Developing Mercy Corps' Vision for Change

In the early 1990s, as Mercy Corps celebrated 10 years of humanitarian relief programming, we took a close look at whether there were other approaches that could build on the foundation laid by relief programming and cement long-term development gains. The use of a human rights lens<sup>14</sup> led the organization to develop a focus on civil society – defined then as the interactions among the private, public and civil sectors. People from all corners of the organization were engaged in developing the concept of civil society into a framework to guide strategic planning and programming and the first version of our Vision for Change was born.<sup>15</sup> Community mobilization would soon become an important way of realizing this vision.

#### Field Testing the Mobilization Methodology

Programs in Bosnia, Lebanon, Tajikistan and Guatemala afforded Mercy Corps the opportunity to pilot various approaches to working with civil society at different stages of the project cycle and in varied contexts. Project results and paying close attention to lessons from the process of implementation indicated it was time to transition civil society ideas into a more robust methodology. One of the critical findings was the importance of having detailed knowledge of local culture and a thorough understanding of the communities in which a given program operates. Another key finding was the importance of community members driving and leading decision making and programming. Our most successful programs were those that stressed methods to help communities organize themselves for positive change, and in which Mercy Corps collaborated with a wide range of local partners. A large part of this was not creating so-called “parallel structures” in which Mercy Corps and non-governmental partners replaced the role of local and national government, but rather worked with these groups to strengthen their capacity to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

Given these basic concepts, Mercy Corps began combining successful techniques from civil society projects in order to create more comprehensive program designs. Our massive response in Kosovo beginning in 1999 was the first time the ‘community mobilization’ approach was fully implemented. Hallmarks of this program were working with communities at the needs identification stage, skill building in decision-making through project implementation, receiving in-kind, or monetary match support from community groups, the engagement of government officials and the private sector and community involvement in monitoring.

Other programs that featured community mobilization techniques in this timeframe included:

- Georgia – rehabilitating social and economic infrastructure including schools, community centers, markets and roads
- Bosnia-Herzegovina – small grants for women's groups, legal aid for displaced people and returnees and food distribution
- Serbia - quick, impact programs for improved civic participation, infrastructure rehabilitation, economic opportunities and environmental protection
- Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - conflict reduction through mitigation of resource-based tensions; promotion of citizen dialogue for improved standards of living and accountable local government
- Eritrea - enhancing the institutional capacity of Parent Teacher Associations and partnership with the Eritrean Ministry of Education

<sup>14</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights. United Nations. 1948.

<sup>15</sup> For more information on the Vision for Change, see [Chapter 1](#).

- Afghanistan – business and vocational education to improve the goods made by Afghan women and increase household income
- Jordan - revitalizing essential small infrastructure, creating income generating opportunities, improving health, education and environmental conditions

Mercy Corps quickly refined the community mobilization approach such that in as short as 18 months, the process could go from the initial participatory assessment to communities being fully able to prioritize, plan, identify resources, and organize to solve problems without Mercy Corps' assistance. This was an invaluable approach in the Balkans and Central Asia where conflict and political and social change affected hundreds of thousands of people. Mercy Corps became known for expertise in mobilizing communities to rebuild physically and connect or reconnect across lines of division and supporting peaceful change.

### Creating Tools for Innovation and Adaptation

In late 2003 Mercy Corps held a Community Mobilization Summit in Uzbekistan in order to identify future directions of the approach. Participants developed indicators of community empowerment and engagement of local governments in the mobilization process and defined the roles of local NGOs. The Summit also developed guidelines for combining economic principles and practices with community mobilization. A resulting toolkit was published in 2004 with tools to aid in every step of the community mobilization process, thus crystallizing Mercy Corps methodology. Many of the tools have stood the test of time and others have been updated in the process of creating this *Guide to Community Mobilization Programming*.

***“Ultimately, the process intends to reduce dependence on outside aid, as communities become adept at identifying and solving their own problems. An effective community mobilization program [or process] strengthens civil society in the most holistic sense.”*** – Mara Galaty, former Mercy Corps Director of Civil Society

Around this time, the first of our large-scale community mobilization programs were drawing to a close, which represented another critical learning opportunity. Three in-depth field studies exploring community mobilization in Georgia, Kosovo, and the Ferghana Valley of Central Asia looked critically at the success of different approaches and the sustainability of various interventions, putting the tools and concepts into context.<sup>16</sup> Each study illustrates how program teams adapted the approach while adhering to the core principles and Mercy Corps' Vision for Change. At this time, Mercy Corps first defined the levels of “successful community mobilization” and developed a mechanism for understanding specific strengths and weaknesses of program approaches (see how it has evolved in [Table 1](#)).

The Ferghana Valley field study laid the groundwork for further methodology development focused on how community mobilization could help reduce the potential for conflict. A resulting framework embeds the traditional community mobilization process within conflict management methodologies, helping people understand the conflict dynamics in which they are working and negotiation/problem-solving skills they can apply throughout the community mobilization process.<sup>17</sup> This is just one example of applying community mobilization methods to a specific technical sector. Mercy Corps' technical support teams continue to seek innovative applications of these methods in their areas of expertise.

In addition to community mobilization trainings conducted in nearly all Mercy Corps offices, several country teams also chose to develop staff training and toolkits tailored to their specific context. Georgia, Eritrea and most recently Indonesia and Mongolia have taken this path, making community mobilization the foundation on which the country strategy and most programming is based.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> An annotated list of these field studies can be found in [section 5.3](#).

<sup>17</sup> “Embedding Conflict Management and Analysis Tools into the Community Mobilization Process” by Anna Young for Mercy Corps. 2005.

<sup>18</sup> See [Annex 7](#) for more information on these guides and other Mercy Corps and external resources.

**Figure 6. Wide Diversity of Current Community Mobilization Application**

In 2007 Mercy Corps undertook a post-program study of two programs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to test the hypothesis that, by investing in mobilization methodologies, program impact can be extended beyond the lifespan of individual projects – the basis of and vision for the organization’s community mobilization approach. The Sustainability Field Study concluded that “one to three years after the end of program, communities believe themselves to be more capable to independently implement solutions and empowered to reach out to local governments and external organizations and businesses.”<sup>19</sup>

Mercy Corps aims to work with communities only until their path to being secure and productive is well established. So it is not coincidence that we prioritize community-led and market-driven development to guide our work in societies in transition. The legacy of community mobilization at Mercy Corps has played a major role in the organization’s evolution and strategic vision for the future. Every day, through programs around the world, Mercy Corps renews our commitment to community mobilization as a vehicle for deep impact and peaceful change.

***“Mercy Corps is constantly striving to understand how we can be most effective in transitional environments. For this reason, we have focused on refining community mobilization approaches. They are a critical means to building and rebuilding social capital and helping communities chart their own paths for development and future prosperity.”*** – Nancy Lindborg, President of Mercy Corps

<sup>19</sup> “Sustainability Field Study: Understanding what promotes lasting change at the community level” by Brandy Westerman and Sandy Sheard for Mercy Corps. 2007. More information about this study can be found in the following sections of this chapter.

## 5.2 Community Mobilization Capacity Statement

Community mobilization is a powerful approach for achieving Mercy Corps' mission of alleviating suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities. In the past 11 years, Mercy Corps has implemented community mobilization programs and activities in 35 countries, successfully managing over US\$300 million in grant funding. The most up to date capacity statement can always be found on the [Digital Library](#).

In **Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan**, part of the Central Asian region called the Ferghana Valley, Mercy Corps' *Peaceful Communities Initiative* (PCI) and *Community Action Investment Program* (CAIP) utilized the community mobilization approach to address tensions and potential conflicts within and between communities. PCI was implemented from 2001-07 and CAIP ran from 2002-05. Through a consensus-building and action planning approach, these USAID-funded projects worked with communities to identify, prioritize, plan, and implement projects that address sources of conflict, such as competition for water or electricity or economic opportunities.

In 2007, Mercy Corps initiated a post-impact study of the sustainability of CAIP and PCI in order to understand the program's sustainability and determine what contributed to that success or failure. The study showed that communities sustained the initiative to maintain or improve conditions in their communities even three years after program completion by continuing to engage in projects and take responsibility for the decision-making process. In particular, communities demonstrated substantial efforts to maintain the many infrastructure projects implemented during the programs, and 93 percent of the surveyed projects are still being actively used by the community after the programs closed. The majority of communities are also taking the initiative to improve their life conditions beyond the scope of the original project. Wide dissemination of the Sustainability Field Study is helping Mercy Corps' teams world-wide learn from the lessons of implementing community mobilization programs in Central Asia.

In **Kyrgyzstan** the four-year, US\$3.5 million *Collaborative Development Initiative* (CDI) is building on the successes of previous mobilization programs in the region. The USAID-funded program focuses on addressing local economic priorities, after identifying that economic hardship is a key contributor to tensions in the region. Between 2005 and 2008, CDI worked with community action groups to implement 74 economic development projects that helped create or expand 439 businesses resulting in over 1,500 new jobs. The mobilization process specifically focuses on youth. Seven hundred young people have engaged in 50 CDI-facilitated economic activities, including apprenticeships in value-chain projects. All of the youth participants also graduated from vocational trainings that were part of the program and approximately half gain employment within three months of graduation.

In **Tajikistan** the *Empowerment for Human Involvement* (EHIO) program promotes a philosophy of participation for local decision-making about development, by training a wide range of community members in participatory methods and promoting youth as a valuable resource. Over ten years, EHIO has worked with different communities and local government groups to do action planning, small project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and creation of mechanisms for effective communication among development actors and stakeholders. One local NGO, established in 2001 through EHIO program support, is dedicated to providing women in rural areas with legal, psychological, social, and technical services through its Women's Resource Center. The Center has become a safe haven for victims of domestic and social abuse and has empowered women to take the lead in improving their livelihoods through agricultural trainings and provision of inputs. The NGO also offers literacy programs, support for women realizing their rights and equal status in the community, legal consultation, and assistance with skills to start new businesses. The organization has mobilized community members to successfully advocate with local governments for legal status of women's committees.

In **Afghanistan** Mercy Corps utilized European Commission funding to implement the *Rural Recovery Program*, a five-year, €6.5 million initiative. The community prioritization and mobilization process resulted in livelihoods and infrastructure investments benefiting 294,000 people. Irrigation, bridge construction and other projects are accompanied by targeted training and knowledge-building workshops, significantly strengthening the asset base of communities. A final survey showed that 80 percent of participating households reported more diversified income sources and capital assets; 80 percent also reported increased agricultural production, income, or dietary diversity.

In **Pakistan** Mercy Corps' mobilization activities have focused on the health sector. One program being implemented with partner John Snow International is *Community Mobilization for Improved Maternal and Newborn Health*, focused in Baluchistan province. The goals of the mobilization approach include building support for maternal and newborn

health at the household level and strengthening the capacity of CBOs/NGOs to develop the skills needed to promote maternal and newborn health over time. This has included increasing recognition of danger signs, birth preparedness, and care-seeking in rural communities. Approximately 70,000 mothers and newborns are benefitting from improved services each year. These efforts have made a marked improvement in overall community health, productivity and social well-being for approximately 900,000 women, children and men.

In **Iraq** Mercy Corps is part of a consortium of international NGOs implementing the *Community Action Program (CAP)*, for which the US congress approved a third round of funding in 2009. CAP fosters grassroots democracy and better local governance by working with Iraqi community groups to design and lead programs that involve them participating in democratic processes. CAP I and II have directly served almost three million Iraqis and CAP III helps them take advantage of the recent stability gains in their country. Over the course of CAP II, Mercy Corps completed 453 community-led projects, the responsibility for which was handed over to community stakeholders, enabling community members, in cooperation with local government, to perpetuate and enhance the benefits offered by these projects. Mercy Corps partnered with 185 community action groups (CAGs) during the program, 44 of which participated in cluster projects while 34 received additional training in negotiation, conflict mitigation and reconciliation. Since 2003, Mercy Corps has been awarded over US\$115 million to implement projects as part of CAP.

In **Lebanon** the *Connected Communities* program started in 2007 is helping marginalized groups and disadvantaged communities join the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) revolution – opening access to a world of new information for mobilizing around social, educational, and financial opportunities. Mercy Corps worked with community leadership circles made up of women, men and youth in five communities around the country to identify social and economic development priorities. The program then worked with representatives of the Partnership for Lebanon – a private sector partnership of Microsoft, Intel, Cisco, Oxidental, and Ghafari Systems – to develop ICT projects that addressed these needs.

In **Sudan** the *Localizing Institutional Capacity in Sudan (LINCS)* program is a US\$20 million initiative supported by USAID/REDSO/ESA to help strengthen civil society across the southern region of the country where development stagnated during a 25-year civil war. Through LINCS, Mercy Corps funds and trains over 70 civil society organizations to tackle community-identified health, education, agriculture and peacebuilding projects by mobilizing community members. The network of LINCS-supported organizations allows CBOs to grapple with governance issues common among them and find joint solutions. Mercy Corps has increased community access to information to support a more informed and engaged civil society through eight functional civil society resource centers. A hallmark of the program is that over half of the local organizations are women-led. Since the program's founding in 2005, Mercy Corps has seen measurable change in women's increased status in the public sphere and voice in community decision-making.

In **Liberia**, Mercy Corps' US\$2.7 million *Youth Education for Life Skills (YES)* program funded by USAID worked with three Liberian NGOs to mobilize marginalized youth (ages 18 to 30) with skills and knowledge to effectively participate in the leadership, conflict resolution, health, self-identity and civic life of their country. Between 2004 and 2006 nearly 15,000 youth participated in the program which also worked with over 250 communities to actively support and accept the integration of war-affected youth as productive members of their society. Collaboration with local government officials was essential to integration processes and private sector partners in the health field provided expertise through workshops.

In **Zimbabwe**, Mercy Corps' two-year *Agricultural Recovery and Food Security* program, supported by the European Community Humanitarian Organization (ECHO), aimed to strengthen household food security and farmer livelihoods through community mobilization. In vulnerable rural districts of Buhera and Chipinge where the population was particularly impacted by drought and land-reform activities, Mercy Corps helped 20 communities start and learn to maintain communal vegetable gardens. The food produced from these gardens benefited over 1,200 households and a supplementary school feeding program further supported 16,000 children.

In **Indonesia**, a number of urban community mobilization programs have built on years of experience implementing mobilization approaches. For example, the primary component of the *Jakarta Flood Management 2* program focuses on community leadership in flood risk management for the city of Jakarta, through non-structural measures including micro-drain cleaning and maintenance and solid waste management improvements. Community Working Committees play a central role in decision-making about all aspects of projects and will be responsible for their sustainability. Funding for the 18-month program was provided by a private corporation from the Netherlands.

In **Sri Lanka** the American Red Cross-funded *Livelihood and Community Recovery Program* helped mobilize 26 communities across three districts to think long-term about local capacities and resources for improved livelihoods and development priorities in their areas. Community Action Groups, made up of formal and informal leaders elected by their community members, identified and appraised local assets, including individuals, associations and local institutions, as well as natural and physical resources, and managed projects that benefited 62,000 people. Sixty-six local business owners received additional training in how to start and improve community businesses in order to maintain the benefits from the mobilization projects. Mercy Corps also provided grants and worked with CBO partners on developing comprehensive plans for delivering community-led programs.

In **Guatemala**, Mercy Corps is currently implementing one of two Latin American projects funded by Irish Aid Civil Society Fund (CSF). Under this CSF Block Grant, Mercy Corps works to build upon the successful results of these initiatives with an increased emphasis on empowering indigenous and vulnerable communities to exercise their rights to actively participate in local development planning and decision-making, with a particular emphasis on sustainable resource management (SRM) issues. Mercy Corps is using key experiences and lessons from these projects and relevant initiatives supported by other donors to shape and inform the design of a comprehensive regional program strategy focusing on community based sustainable development and natural resource planning in Latin America. Through the Block Grant Mercy Corps is working with marginalized communities and civil society organizations in Guatemala (the Verapaces) and **Colombia** (North Atlantic Coast/Cartagena) to mobilize for the recognition of legally guaranteed human rights and for improved resource management through participatory planning and engagement with local government. Another objective of the program is to ensure CSOs have capacity to design and implement SRM plans, with an emphasis on strengthened connections between civil society and local government.

In **Kosovo**, the *Municipal Integration and Support Initiative* (MISI), a five-year, US\$7.8 million USAID-funded program, mobilized communities for effective reintegration of people displaced during the 1999 conflict as well as inter-ethnic cooperation on infrastructure and youth projects. The process included community group formation in order to carry out action planning, project prioritization, selection, implementation and monitoring. The final evaluation showed that 85 percent of the municipalities clearly understood that MISI's primary focus was on the process and local capacity building, not solely on infrastructure project implementation. The program also improved cooperation among citizens and their municipal governments. In over half of the municipalities where the program was active, MISI action plans served as a basis for the Municipal Returns Strategy implemented by the local government. To date the majority of infrastructure projects have been well maintained and 96 percent of the communities feel full ownership of the projects which increased responsibility for their long-term sustainability.

In **Serbia**, the *Community Revitalization through Democratic Action* (CRDA) program empowered local citizens to identify and address critical needs for social and economic revitalization in 18 municipalities in southern Serbia. Through Community Action Groups (CAGs) established at the county level, the seven-year program (2001-07) increased inter-community participation, improved social and economic infrastructure, increased incomes through public works projects and improved environmental conditions and practices. To ensure diverse representation within the CAGs, each group included at least 30 percent women and 20 percent minority representatives. By the end of CRDA, Mercy Corps and communities implemented 325 projects with a combined value of more than \$21.5 million (of this amount \$12 million was USAID funding). These projects included: 239 civil infrastructure projects; 72 projects to increase citizen participation in local initiatives; and 17 projects to increase environmental awareness and protection in areas such as water treatment, erosion control, and other environmental infrastructure. In addition, larger "cluster" projects brought together several villages to address economic issues or shared resources, such as water. Evaluation surveys showed that as a result of CRDA, 93 percent of respondents saw increased community mobilization and participation of diverse stakeholders in community decision-making; 42 percent reported increased capacity to identify the main problems faced by the community, and in particular improved representation by marginalized groups. Local contributions also far exceeded the 25 percent requirement for matching funds and 80 percent of the economic-focused CAGs were continuing work past program involvement and had institutionalized Mercy Corps' economic development approach at some level. The external evaluation of CRDA said that, "Mercy Corps' systematic approach towards involving all stakeholders on the local level and building the responsibility of citizens for their economic growth and welfare, as well as creating a sense of ownership, will be left as their legacy to program municipalities."

### 5.3 Field Studies

The field studies listed here provide detailed insight on Mercy Corps' experience in community mobilization. Areas studied include: sustained community initiatives; collaborative governance; youth and community action; and sustaining community mobilization behaviors. Each study also provides observations and recommendations helpful for designing and implementing successful, sustainable community mobilization initiatives.

**Mercy Corps. Ferghana Valley Field Study – Reducing the Potential for Conflict through Community Mobilization. Mercy Corps. 2003.**

This study is based on the findings of a three-week field visit to the Ferghana Valley in May 2003 to look at Mercy Corps' two USAID-funded community mobilization programs. The study identifies six key themes: (1) targeting key stakeholders for sustainable change; (2) addressing community perceptions of conflict, not projecting external analysis onto local populations; (3) building a program approach around positive examples in local cultures, traditions and institutions; (4) promoting and modeling transparency and accountability; (5) addressing issues pertaining to and of concern to youth; and (6) involving a broad range of civil society actors including government and local NGOs. This study will be useful for headquarters and field office staff.

**Mercy Corps Field Study: Long-Term Impacts of Community Mobilization in Kosovo under the Healthy Community Initiative. Mercy Corps. 2004.**

This report presents the findings from a field study to determine the long-term impacts of the community mobilization component of the Healthy Communities Initiative (HCI) in Kosovo. It uses the findings to better define stages of empowerment, cite commonalities amongst mobilized communities, and provide lessons learned and recommendations to guide future community mobilization programming. The report can be utilized by headquarters and field staff.

**Mercy Corps. Georgia Field Study – Understanding the Legacy of Community Mobilization. Mercy Corps. 2004.**

The *Georgia Field Study* analyzes the factors that contribute toward empowered communities focusing on the sustainability of the mobilization process. Specifically, the study asked two key questions on community mobilization: (1) what, if any, community characteristics contribute towards successful mobilization? (2) What are the critical inputs and technical approaches that Mercy Corps has provided to strengthen the probability of sustained mobilization? This report will be useful to headquarters staff.

**Mercy Corps. Lessons for Kosovo's Next Transition – An International NGO's Experience. Discussion Paper Number 1, 2007.**

This paper draws on Mercy Corps' experience in Kosovo in order to accomplish the following goals: 1) to highlight the most essential themes from Mercy Corps' contributions to post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction; 2) to examine lessons about impact and adaptation to critical changes in the social and political environment; and 3) to offer specific recommendations to policy makers, donors, and development actors as final status is established and implemented. It will be useful to headquarters staff.

**Mercy Corps. Sustainability Field Study – Understanding What Promotes Lasting Change at the Community Level, December. 2007.**

This report is a product of Mercy Corps' field study on two USAID-funded community recovery programs in Central Asia. The study results demonstrate that, as a result of the community mobilization methodology used by Mercy Corps in Central Asia, communities perceive themselves to be more capable to independently implement solutions and empowered to reach out to local actors. The report will thus be useful to both headquarters and field office staff.



## Annexes

### Annex 1: Tools and Activities for Community Mobilization

	Activities	Responsible Actors	Tools	Tool #	Description	
<b>Pre-positioning</b>	Initial Site Visit Rapid Assessment Desk Study Focus Groups Target Area Selection Introductory Community Meeting	<b>Program Team</b> (Program Managers and Community Mobilizers)	Initial Site Visit Checklist	1	List of things to observe or inquire about	
			Rapid Assessment Tool	2	Also see the Good Enough Guide for assessments in emergency settings	
			Desk Study Checklist	3	List of information that can be obtained remotely	
			Focus Group Facilitation Guide		See Tool #12	
<b>Assessment and Planning</b>	PRA/PLA Baseline Study Community Profiles Community Selection Field-based Immersion and Observation Project Selection and Verification	<b>Program Team</b> with Community Members	PRA/PLA Sample Tools	4	Sorting, ranking, transect walks, timelines, seasonal schedules, Venn diagram and others	
			PRA/PLA Sample Interview Guide	5	For semi-structured interviews	
			Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Checklist	6	For considering environmental implications of projects	
			Environmental Memorandum	7	Public notice of rehabilitation or building projects	
			Community Assessment Tool (Tension Index)	8	Diagnostic evaluation of conflict levels; uses Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA)	
			Community Profile	9	Categories for describing population and traits	
			Community Selection	10	Table for weighing selection criteria	
			Strategic Visioning	11	For CAGs about past activities and future plans	
	Relationship Mapping Action Planning Project Prioritization Village Plans	<b>Community Members</b> with Program Team	Scored Relationship Mapping	13	Process for identifying groups and individuals, within a community and outside, who can be part of projects or have influence to consider	
			Action Planning Process	14	Suggested steps for action planning meetings	
			Project Prioritization Meeting Tips	15	Suggested process for facilitating prioritization meetings	
			Village Development Planning	16	Guidelines for creating plans and sharing with stakeholders	
	<b>Structures and Agreements</b>	Leadership Structures – Community Action Groups (CAG) and Project Implementation Committees (PIC)  Signed Agreements Community Contribution CAG Management Training	<b>Program Team and CAGs</b>	Project Agreement with CAGs	17	Contract between Mercy Corps and CAG defining roles and responsibilities
				CAG and PIC Formation	18	Guideline for electing CAG and PIC members
				CAG Constitution	19	Sample text outlining rights, responsibilities and protocols of CAGs
				Confirmation Meeting Format	20	Sample agenda for CAG confirmation meeting
CAG Project Proposal				21	Goals, expectations, participation, budget etc.	
CAG Conflict of Interest Statement				22	Statement between the CAG and Mercy Corps	
Communicating Mercy Corps' Procedures and Policies		Proposal Evaluation Form		23	For Community Mobilizer comment on proposals	
		Employee Conflict of Interest Form		24	Statement between Mercy Corps staff and CAG	
		Organizational Capacities Index (OCI) for CBOs		25	Tool to measure five organizational capacities	
		OCI for NGOs		26	Tool to measure five organizational capacities	
		Project Approval Sheet		27	Mercy Corps approval of CAG plans	
		Select Financial Policies		28	Specific to community mobilization	
See the Procurement, Administration and Logistics Management (PALM) manual See Sub-grant Manual and resources						

**Annex 1: Tools and Activities for Community Mobilization (CONTINUED)**

	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Responsible Actors</b>	<b>Tools</b>	<b>Tool #</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Implementation</b>	Project Formulation Sustainability Plan Budget Management Advocacy Project Completion and Celebration	<b>CAGs</b> with Program Team with Local Government and Local Private Sector Actors	Cross-Visit Reporting Form	29	Observations/ideas for improving the program/ project following CAG/Program Team cross-visits
			CAG Final Project Report Form	30	Form for describing change made by the project
Media and Communication Guide			31	Recommendations for using media and communication technologies for mobilization	
	Capacity Building in Leadership Mentoring Technical Assistance	<b>Program Team</b> with CAGs	See Staff Development and Leadership materials		
<b>Monitoring and Learning</b>	Baseline/Endline Surveys Capacity Indices Self or Peer-Monitoring Target Setting with Community Feedback Success Stories Case Studies	<b>CAGs and Program Team</b> with Community Members, Local Government and Local Private Sector Actors	Mobilizer's Monitoring Form	32	Table for monitoring CAG activities
			CAG Impact Form	33	For describing impact at the household level
			CAG Monitoring Form	34	for Community Mobilizer to monitor CAG/project
			Empowerment Impacts Guide and Form	35	For measuring empowerment and other non-concrete changes from a project
			Strategic Monitoring Form	36	For staff to track change in community mobilization, grants, social policy etc.
			CAG Questionnaire	37	About perceptions such as project implications and government relationships and project process
			See DM&E In-a-Box resources for monitoring See Organizational Learning resources		
<b>Evaluation</b>	Mid-Program Evaluation Post-Program Evaluation	<b>Program Team or External Evaluators</b> with Community Members	Project Scoring Sheet	38	Numerical evaluation of project in 11 categories
			Indicator Menu for CAG Project Impact	39	Concrete indicators of project impact
			See DM&E In-a-Box resources for evaluations		
<b>Re-Positioning</b>	Reconfirm Agreements Expansion/Scaling-Up	<b>Program Team and Community Members</b> with Local Government and Local Private Sector Actors	See Pre-Positioning / Assessment and Planning Tools above		
<b>Handover</b>	Exit Strategy Maintenance Committee Leadership Handover	<b>Program Team, Community Members and Local Government</b> with Local Private Sector Actors	Exit Strategy Checklist	40	For exit planning as soon as the community is moving toward independent sustainability
			Maintenance Committee Roles	41	Sample list of roles, responsibilities and coordination of infrastructure maintenance
			Leadership Handover Checklist	42	For Program Team and CAG/other lasting leadership structures

## **Annex 2: Embedding Conflict Management Tools in the Community Mobilization Process**

As Mercy Corps has deepened its approach to conflict, program teams have been increasingly requesting tools that will help them address conflict and problem-solving issues more sensitively and with more impact. The table below outlines a simplified model of the community mobilization process together with the tools/training modules traditionally used by Mercy Corps. The final column outlines some conflict management and analysis tools and indicates where they might be applied in the process. Many of the tools are useful at multiple points in the mobilization process – however for the sake of simplicity they are only mentioned once or twice.

Programs will often want to build conflict management skills at multiple levels during program implementation:<sup>20</sup>

- With field staff who need analytical frameworks to understand the conflict dynamics of the contexts in which they are working and negotiation/problem-solving skills to work through challenges during program implementation;
- With community leaders and members of initiative groups so that they can apply these skills in their own communities; or
- With institutions (e.g. NGOs or government) who are interested in applying these skills in their work but also in continuing to train others and can provide a sustainable resource in the regions where Mercy Corps is working, even after the end of the program.

The table that follows is a brief summary of each of the tools. There are clearly many additional resources available for teams who want to hone particular skills. These can be requested from the Mercy Corps Conflict Management Group (MC-CMG) team.

### **How do we build these skills?**

These skills can be acquired through multiple approaches: by requesting intensive on-site training by a member of the MC-CMG team; by sending staff members to attend training and then passing on the skills to the rest of the team; by arranging cross-visits with other programs who may already have conflict experience. Budgets, program size and each individual situation will determine the most appropriate approach. MC-CMG staff can help guide tailoring an intervention to best suit the needs of the program. For more information, contact Sharon Morris at [smorris@dc.mercycorps.org](mailto:smorris@dc.mercycorps.org)

<sup>20</sup>Conflict management may be a term that does not always resonate at the community level, particularly in cultures that attribute specific connotations to the definition of conflict. Mercy Corps' program teams have found that talking about 'problem solving' skills can side-step language issues and enable staff and communities to focus on skills development that is applicable in all contexts.

### Building Conflict Analysis and Management Skills during the Mobilization Process

	Community Mobilization Framework	Community Mobilization Activities	Conflict Programming Tools
1	Pre-positioning	Initial Site Visit Rapid Assessment Focus Groups Target Area Selection Introductory Community Meeting	Conflict Analysis and Stakeholder Mapping Tools Do No Harm Framework Relationship Mapping Conflict Tree
2	Assessment & Planning	Baseline Study Community Profiles Community Selection Field-based Immersion and Observation Project Selection and Verification	Circle Chart Action Planning Community Assessment Tool (Tension Index) Common Indicators PMP Baseline questionnaire tools
		Relationship Mapping	Scored Relationship and Mapping Exercise
3	Implementation	Project Formulation Sustainability Plan Budget Management Advocacy	Introductory Negotiation Training Advanced Negotiation Training One Text Process Facilitated Joint Brainstorming Difficult Conversations Module Reconciliation and Forgiveness
		Capacity Building in Leadership Mentoring Technical Assistance	
4	Monitoring and Learning	Baseline/Endline Surveys Capacity Indices Self or Peer-Monitoring Target Setting with Community Feedback Success Stories Case Studies	Common Indicators Performance Management Table
5	Evaluation	Baseline/ Endline Surveys Mid-Program Evaluation Post-Program Evaluation	Evaluation tools

#### Definition of Tools

*Do No Harm Analysis Framework:* Developed by the Local Capacities for Peace Project, this planning tool helps to identify and enables teams to assess the conflict dynamics where they are working and to understand how proposed program interventions are likely to either heighten or decrease tensions between competing groups. .

*Relationship Mapping Exercise:* This exercise is a way for participants to chart out key stakeholders and the power relationships between them in order to understand how this affects tensions within a community. It can be conducted at a micro level (e.g. the community) or at a more macro-level (e.g. a country or region). It can be used by staff in the community selection phase and also by communities themselves.

*Conflict Tree:* This training exercise begins to analyze the reasons why people engage in conflict. In order to address conflict in a durable way, it is not enough to address the symptoms or effects of conflict – it is also important to address the “root causes.” To find out these root causes, a tool called the “Conflict Tree” is used.

*Circle Chart Action Planning:* This tool, also known as *four quadrant problem-solving model* is an analytical tool that uses a four step process to help determine problems and ensure that the solutions proposed really will lead to the desired outcome.

*Community Tension Index:* A set of questions that can be asked at a community level during the assessment process to help gauge potential sources of conflict within a community. Community Mobilization Tool 8: Community Assessment Tool, was adapted from this index.

*Common Indicators Performance Management Table:* A table of common indicators CMG has been collecting to begin measuring levels of violence, increase in stability and peace. This document features common indicators CMG has developed thus far and encourage groups to incorporate them as they think it is appropriate according to program designs. <https://clearspace.mercycorps.org/docs/DOC-6483>

*Scored Relationship and Mapping Exercise:* After relationship mapping, community members are then asked several quantitative and qualitative questions about each of the relationships. These “scores” are then combined and averaged to constitute a Community Tension Index. Repeating this procedure at different intervals allows for showing changes in tension within the communities. Also listed as Community Mobilization [Tool 13](#).

*Introductory Negotiation Training:* An introduction to the basic skills, this workshop offers concise, step by step proven strategies for coming to mutually acceptable agreements across a broad range of negotiations or conflicts involving superiors, subordinates, colleagues and external partners.

Negotiation and Communications Trainers Manual: <https://clearspace.mercycorps.org/docs/DOC-4873>

Negotiation and Communications Participants Manual: <https://clearspace.mercycorps.org/docs/DOC-4872>

*Advanced Negotiation Training:* This offers participants frameworks, tools and strategic guidelines for handling the more complex negotiations that are common in organizational life, particularly in multilateral organizations with numerous stakeholders.

*Reconciliation and Forgiveness:* This training is incorporated within programs targeting post-conflict societies to advance the peace and reconciliation process within communities. It provides methods to address the long term process of overcoming mistrust between divided peoples and creating constructive relationships among different groups. Another important element is recognition among actors within a conflict to develop a common understanding of the causes of the conflict and to develop shared notions of responsibility for dealing with these underlying causes and effects. Training features of the program include role plays and case studies, dialogue sessions and introduction to methodology on how to establish peace initiatives and action groups.

*Difficult Conversations:* Helps participants build the skills and awareness needed to handle serious differences in important relationships respectfully, routinely, and creatively. A framework helps participants think through and prepare to tackle important issues head on.

*One Text Process:* This consensus-building approach provides a process for merging multiple options or solutions into one document.

*Facilitated Joint Brainstorming:* This approach provides suggestions for how leaders can gather opinions from a diverse group of people in order to make good decisions.

*Baseline and Evaluation Tools:* Examples of these M&E tools for conflict and peacebuilding are available on Clearspace in the Conflict and Peacebuilding Community of Practice <https://clearspace.mercycorps.org/community/cops/conflict> and on the Digital Library.

### Annex 3: Mobilizing with New Media and Information and Communication Technologies

Efficient mobilization often requires facilitating information exchange among large groups. Traditional media such as community radio offers proven ways of announcing meetings or broadcasting behavior change messages. New media<sup>21</sup> and mobile technologies add even more dynamic and low-cost opportunities for information exchange. With the growing availability of mobile phones in the developing world, and to some extent the Internet, there are now a wealth of options for using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for mobilization – whether a community is all in one location or spread out over many places, in rural villages or urban centers. It is important to understand what tools are used in target communities to exchange information and mapping these dynamics and identifying communication resources during initial assessments or PRA is essential.

#### COMMUNITY RADIO

Information provision and outreach were identified by communities participating in the Community Development Initiative in **Kyrgyzstan** and **Uzbekistan** and became an integral part of the program. CAGs prioritized and contributed resources to help upgrade a local radio station and create the Jalalabat Bazaar Information Center which aired programs on and provided information about local economic and social issues in both Kyrgyz and Uzbek languages.

#### Mobilizing Communities Through Mobile Phones

- Often CAG decisions are needed in between regular meetings in order to keep projects moving forward. Broadcasting text messages (SMS) to various audiences – e.g. CAG members themselves, community residents, or broader groups including absent stakeholders such as migrant workers - requesting their feedback or vote is a way to keep decision-making participatory and efficient. One efficient tool that can efficiently push out a large number of SMS messages and facilitate text-based voting is [FrontlineSMS](#), a free tool designed for NGOs working in development contexts.
- Mobile phones can be used by groups that are dispersed by conflict or disaster in order to quickly gauge needs and members' capacity to help each other. In addition, they can also be used to send information to a central collection point which can provide broader context to a variety of crisis situations. One development tool that uses “crowdsourced” information to create interactive maps is [Ushahidi.com](#).
- Many program staff and partners already use mobile phones as a formal or informal early warning mechanism when they learn of information or see indicators of changing dynamics that could impact programming. Communities too can use phones in this way.



*Tip: Use your cell phones to document stories! Stories, especially success stories, will motivate and inspire people. Collecting stories from the field is essential to good mobilization. We share those stories at the office to better understand the communities. We use those stories in trainings. We use the stories to help other communities understand what is possible. We use stories in donor reports and program documentation. When a community member is describing a success – use your phone to capture what they are saying. Take their picture, record their voice, or make notes by SMS. This will make it much easier to document the story back at the office and capture the person's actual words – very powerful!*

#### Mobilizing Online Communities

- Project websites offer new ways of informing and communicating with stakeholders who have internet access. However, the costs of hosting a site and the time and skill required for keeping content fresh, interactive and well-presented makes this option less attractive and more difficult to sustain.
- Social networking platforms (such as [Facebook](#)) offer free private or public space where all members can jointly manage content and connect with other individuals who have similar interests to exchange information and discuss various topics. In urban or semi-urban mobilization projects, CAGs, youth CAGs or extended community groups may find this a helpful tool for more regularly focusing conversation threads on community interests. Most regions [prefer different platforms](#), such as [Orkut](#) in India.

<sup>21</sup> New media is a term that covers computerized, digital or networked information and communication technologies, such as the Internet. New media is interactive and allows for a huge increase in both the speed and the amount of communication shared. While new media is both a product and driving force of globalization, it is also a tool for community-led social change.

- Blogging platforms such as [Blogger](#) or [WordPress](#), or even “microblogging” platforms like [Twitter](#) offer outlets for individuals to express their thoughts or perspectives. While it may be hard to apply this to the community mobilization process, Mercy Corps project managers may want to consider blogging for communicating informal ideas or updates regularly with other project partners or donors.
- Social bookmarking is a way that Internet users can share web-based resources (via bookmarks) to private or public groups. For example, if local partner NGOs establish a shared group on a social bookmarking application such as [Delicious](#), any member or even Mercy Corps staff could share a web link (perhaps to a useful description of new approaches in fee-for-service infrastructure management, for example) with all members of the group.
- [YouTube](#), [Flickr](#) and other video or photo sharing sites allow individuals to post multimedia content that can be shared with private or public groups. For mobilization programs or activities that have conflict mitigation or relationship-building components, the development of stakeholder-produced content and the sharing of it via these platforms can, when carefully managed, be a positive tool for allowing individuals to express themselves.
- Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP) service like [Skype](#) allow users to make free user-to-user phone calls via the internet. Or for a small fee, VOIP users can call regular phones as well. These applications also allow users to have simultaneous voice or instant message conversations with multiple users in different geographical areas. It can also be used to communicate with people using text, via instant messaging services built into these applications.



*Tip: Be sure to take the time to fully understand who might be excluded by using different technologies in community mobilization. For example, using multiple forms of communication are important in low literacy contexts so everyone is reached by awareness campaigns or knows how they can participate. Also, know what technologies already exist - it is not always what might be expected. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, approximately a quarter of the population has access to a cell phone but only less than half of one percent have access to a land/fixed line phone.<sup>22</sup>*

### Mapping Mobilization

- Mapping is a tool often used in identifying community issues, planning programs and understanding results of community mobilization programs. Paper and pen or sticks and stones are still the best place to start with low literacy communities, but there may be situations where electronic maps with program information can be helpful. Examples include working with contractors on a community infrastructure program or advocating with local government or for public information.
- [Google Earth](#) is a free tool and Mercy Corps' [Rough Google Earth Guide](#) is helpful for planning applications. For staff and community members with basic web skills, Google Earth is simple to use by a wide audience.

In addition to the websites mentioned above, the following groups offer resources relevant to using media for mobilization:

- Internews – [www.internews.org](http://www.internews.org)
- Tactile Technology Collective - <http://onlineadvocacy.tacticaltech.org/>
- Global Youth Engagement, an initiative of Mercy Corps. See the ICT case on the following page. [www.globalcitizencorps.org](http://www.globalcitizencorps.org)

<sup>22</sup> “2007/2008 Human Development Report” by UNDP, 2008. [http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data\\_sheets/cty\\_ds\\_COD.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_COD.html)

## ICT Case: Mobilizing Youth in Gaza Through Digital Media

Since 2004, Mercy Corps programs in the West Bank/Gaza have gained significant experience connecting Arab youth to each other and to American youth through ICT. Among other things, this platform is used for mobilizing youth to increase awareness among their peers and wider communities regarding diverse perspectives on challenging issues such as the conflict between Gaza and Israel in late 2008 and early 2009. By training Gazan youth in the use of digital media through earlier mobilization and other programs, they were able to access this technology during the conflict in order to share information and raise awareness from their unique perspective. The result was nearly instantaneous communication that made distance and borders less significant and common issues easier to mobilize around.

Particularly for participants who lived far from others in the program, the cell network Mercy Corps helped create became an important “virtual community.” Youth received training in sharing text messages and were given a cell phone and/or a small stipend for covering the costs of airtime and SMS texts. In addition to being a mechanism to share information that helped their fellow participants mobilize for change, youth involved say that text messages from their peers in the group had positive psychosocial effects on their coping and healing process.

The youth also drew on peaceful change skills acquired through earlier training in order to mobilize their peers locally. As one student reported on January 5, 2009, “The war in Gaza taught me that I am responsible toward my country as well as my family and friends. I believe that we are the only ones who must stand up for our rights and I believe that there are many ways to do that. War is not the only choice.”

### Lessons for Community Mobilization

Numerous researchers have found a relationship between high youth unemployment, limited opportunities for youth to address grievances, and increased likelihood of youth engagement in extremism or violence. Given that the so-called “youth bulge” will continue to supply more human capital than what the global economy can absorb, this is both a challenge and an opportunity for Mercy Corps. Finding new forms of engagement, including community mobilization, can help channel youth energy, build their capabilities to benefit from globalization, and establish the foundation for innovation, problem solving and caring societies.

The cell network among Gazan youth also helped Mercy Corps conduct weekly polls to gauge opinions on important questions such as agreement or disagreement about ceasefire. Through this medium, program participants were willing to share their opinions about topics that were generally not publically discussed due to security concerns. The answers received from SMS were easily analyzed using Microsoft Excel and Word.<sup>23</sup> By aggregating the answers the program was able to track evolving perceptions and reflect them back to participants. This process was effective at reinforcing attitude and behavior change – a mobilization goal of the program.

### Future Mobilization Applications of ICT in Gaza

Both traditional and new media offer vehicles for mobilization and a way that youth can help bring something new to their communities. Mercy Corps is expanding work with youth and media to create a youth-led news information outlet which will capture and distribute stories, announcements and useful knowledge from/to youth across the Middle East through various channels such as newspaper, e-newsletter, voicenews, and SMS text. Interesting stories will be used as part of the Global Youth Engagement curriculum to mobilize collaborative projects within and across communities in the region, hopefully with reinforcing support from peers overseas. By scaling up the use of multi-media, a new generation of global citizens will be capable and mobilized to build secure, productive and just communities at home and around the world.

The Global Youth Engagement Initiative inspires and equips young leaders to take informed actions at home while building secure, productive and just communities around the world. To learn more, visit: [www.globalcitizencorps.org](http://www.globalcitizencorps.org) or contact Annie Bertrand [abertrand@nyc.mercycorps.org](mailto:abertrand@nyc.mercycorps.org) or Ai Hirashiki [ahirashiki@nyc.mercycorps.org](mailto:ahirashiki@nyc.mercycorps.org)

<sup>23</sup> Souktel partnered with Mercy Corps to help manage the technology aspect of the program.

## Annex 4: Community Mobilization and Disaster Risk Reduction

This annex shows some of the ties between community mobilization and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), the systematic development and application of policies, strategies and practices that minimize vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society. DRR activities help to prepare communities for and mitigate the adverse impacts of hazards within a broader context of sustainable development. Mercy Corps believes that DRR is an essential part of our mission to help people build secure, productive and just communities. We therefore incorporate DRR strategies in our assistance work to help communities become more resilient to hazards, and thus reduce the likelihood that their development may be undermined by one or more disasters.

Just as community mobilization can be a methodology within other programmatic sectors or the primary objective of a program, DRR is similar. There are many “stand alone” DRR projects (that primarily use a community mobilization methodology) and there are also DRR elements that are included in programming in order to reduce the effects of potential risks to that project.

For more extensive information on different types of DRR activities, please refer to the DRR section in Clearspace and/or contact Susan Romanski at [sromanski@nyc.mercycorps.org](mailto:sromanski@nyc.mercycorps.org).

### **Within DRR programming, community mobilization techniques are used often.**

During the assessment phase in a community mobilization program, many different types of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) are used. In DRR programming the type of assessment that is used is typically called a vulnerabilities and capacities assessment (VCA), which are 1) participatory and 2) have a goal of collecting and analyzing the hazards in a community and the vulnerabilities and capacities in communities to cope with the hazards; e.g. looking at the risk within communities.

Another commonality is the “action planning” exercise that communities undertake when deciding on projects. In DRR programming, a key product is the “emergency plan” which lays out what a community would do in the event of an emergency and how the community might take action to mitigate and prepare for hazards that would cause an emergency.

Leadership structure, so important for community action groups described in the main part of this guide, is equally important for disaster management committees or any group of key stakeholders in the community who take the responsibility of developing and maintaining an emergency plan for the community. These groups lead the process of creating an action plan for preparedness, mitigation efforts, and response if needed.

As any group usually requires some capacity building to ensure effective implementation of projects, capacity building around DRR is essential and is usually carried out in the form of training and simulations within the community which requires the participation of all members of the community. See the DRR case from Nepal below.

Like in mobilization programs, community contributions are also seen in DRR projects. One way that Mercy Corps encourages community contributions for DRR is working with local groups to create emergency funds quickly accessible in the event of an emergency. There are also numerous ways in which a community can make in-kind contributions to mitigation efforts such as mobilizing labor and local materials to reinforce riverbeds, plant trees, and clear evacuation routes.

Friendly competitions between communities, schools, and districts to enhance emergency response skills are extremely popular and very effective at keeping skills active. Cross-visits, especially to visit different small scale mitigation works result in communities learning from one another.

### **Within any type of community mobilization project, one can integrate DRR activities or elements.**

Some relevant questions for Mercy Corps teams to ask of communities:

- *Are community members aware of the common hazards in their area including potential hazards exacerbated by climate change?*
- *Do they feel prepared to deal with these hazards should they occur?*
- *Has a vulnerability or capacities assessment been done to see how the community might cope?*
- *Does the community have a disaster management committee of any kind to deal with emergencies?*

- *Does the community have an emergency plan that is linked up to a regional or national plan?*
- *Are there early warning systems in place for common hazards?*
- *Are youth groups, people with disabilities and vulnerable groups in the community participating in emergency planning?*
- *Is there sufficient public awareness and information sharing on risks and response mechanisms?*
- *Are there any projects being carried out to prepare or mitigate against potential disaster risks?*

The answers to these questions may bring awareness that more can be done within the community to prepare and mitigate disasters. In this case, the community mobilization approach and tools described in this guide can be useful for organizing disaster management committees.

Whether implementing a DRR project that uses community mobilization methodology or trying to integrate DRR elements into other programming, active participation and accountability of the community is essential.

### **DRR Case: Community Based DRR in Nepal**

For an example of integrating mobilization methodologies in DRR programming, look to Nepal. In 2007 Mercy Corps and the Nepal Red Cross Society began partnering for the Kailali Disaster Risk Reduction Initiative, focused on helping six communities mitigate the impact of flooding on their safety and livelihoods. An evaluation of the European Commission-funded program showed it was indeed achieving local results toward all priority actions and goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), a 10-year plan adopted by 168 governments to make the world safer from natural disaster. The HFA aims to significantly reduce disaster-related human, social, economic, and environmental losses by 2015.

Disaster Preparedness Committees in each of the six program communities were established, similarly to how [CAGs](#) are formed, with defined roles and responsibilities of leaders and sub-committees. Financial transparency was achieved through social auditing. Community-managed emergency funds were instrumental for disaster preparedness, response and maintenance projects prioritized and implemented by communities. Physical construction projects included low-cost, replicable, and easily maintained bioengineering techniques such as bamboo work, sand-filled cement sacks, and planting thousands of plants. Program evaluators report that “these initiatives have significantly reduced riverbank erosion and increased the local communities’ confidence in the possibility that agricultural land and communities can be saved [during floods].”<sup>24</sup>

A wide range of community members – including over 1,000 teachers and students identified as key change agents in the communities – participated in capacity building activities to help people identify risks, assess, monitor, and carry out early warning initiatives such as:

- Flood level monitoring
- Distributing hand-operated sirens
- Planning for use of community shelters and boats for means of safety or evacuation during floods
- Establishing evacuation routes

Through the program, communities strengthened their capacity to lead DRR activities, develop knowledge-sharing mechanisms, and create village development plans (see [section 4.2](#)). These skills also help them promote the integration of DRR into sustainable development policies and planning at the local level and beyond. Early successes toward this end include receiving Rs. 50,000 (US\$700) from the District Water Induced Disaster Preparedness Office toward additional infrastructure projects and Rs. 70,000 (US\$1000) from the District Soil Conservation Office designated for community-led efforts that replicate the bioengineering techniques introduced through the Mercy Corps/Nepal Red Cross Society program.

<sup>24</sup> “Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction: Contribution to Hyogo Framework for Action.” By Dhruva Raj Gautam and Sudarshan Khanal. February 2009.

## Annex 5: Sample Position Descriptions

Other community mobilization position descriptions can be found on the [Digital Library](#).

<b>Position Title:</b> Community Mobilization Manager	
<b>Duty Station:</b>	<Enter the job location specific to this position and a secondary one, if applicable>
<b>Position Category:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Full-time <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time <b>AND</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Regular <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary
<b>Salary Level:</b>	
<b>Current Employee:</b>	< List the name of the staff member currently in this position.>

### Program/department summary:

<Summarize in two or three sentences the key elements of the program or department to highlight activities and overall goals.>

### General position summary:

The community Mobilization Manager will report to the Project Manager. The post requires an excellent knowledge of the village/communities dynamics in [country]. S/He will have to work closely with [sector or program teams] to ensure that community's needs are reflected in the overall [project] implementation. <Describe in a sentence or two the true essence and purpose of this position.>

### Essential job functions:

<List essential job responsibilities in order of priority. Consider the percentage of time engaged in activities. When feasible, essential responsibilities should be described in terms of outcome rather than task-oriented. Last 2 items below should always be present on a PD.>

1. Implement the [program] community mobilization strategy in a manner that promotes [priorities].
2. Participate in the design of the [program] community mobilization strategy and come up with a workable implementation plan within the [program] time-frame and MC policies.
3. In conjunction with the [program manager] and the [program team leader], design a strategic community development plan in particular with focusing in [sectors prioritized by the program].
4. Mobilize up to XX communities in [location] to engage them in an open dialogue of selection, prioritization and community needs assessment.
5. Strengthen and promote the process of community development in project areas, particularly identify, address and resolve community issues.
6. Assist in implementing the activity plans identified and agreed by the communities for [type of projects] according to the guidelines and schedules set by the [program] community mobilization strategy.
7. Conduct feasibility studies, surveys and need assessments.
8. Establish new contacts with communities as well as revive old ones where MC has been working.
9. Prepare and conduct trainings and learning tools/materials for communities and/or other trainers.
10. Supervise and organize the Community Mobilization Group, scheduling field visits, training sessions, meetings with local leaders and women's groups.
11. Identify training needs of communities and translate them in simple training courses which help communities to self-assess their current situation and identify possible solutions which can be potentially taken on by the [program] implementation plan.
12. Design, and, if security allows, facilitate trainings in rural communities in accordance with [program] plan.
13. Engage women in community participation in a way that promotes gender equality respecting the local environment and adapts to the [country] cultural values.

14. Prepare written reports, briefing papers, short-hand notes in English documenting the training sessions conducted highlighting results achieved and challenges to overcome.
15. Provide written and oral translation and report writing for program staff, as necessary;
16. Track project development throughout the target area;
17. Adhere to all Mercy Corps administrative procedures and policies;
18. Conduct himself/herself both professionally and personally in such a manner as to bring credit to Mercy Corps and to not jeopardize its humanitarian mission in [country]
19. Collect data from field teams and prepare summarized reports for Program Management;
20. Assist with general program operations and field-based activity;
21. Liaise with and support key program staff to ensure that the [program] is running effectively and making best use of project resources.
22. Other duties as assigned.

**Supervisory responsibility:**

<Describe the staff member’s responsibility for directing the work of others, please list these staff member’s position titles.>

**Accountability**

**Reports directly to:**

**Works directly with:**

<List the people that this person is accountable to by position title. First list the Primary Supervisor and then identify other key positions or policies that the position is tied to in terms of working relationships and performance standards.>

**Knowledge and experience:**

This position requires a minimum of a Bachelor’s Degree or 2-5 years of experience focused in community mobilization, demand-driven projects, participatory planning and rural/community development. Training in community mobilization and rehabilitation required. Training experience of impoverished rural areas desirable. Capacity to undertake hazardous travel to rural areas is needed. Excellent communication skills, both verbally and in writing. Effectively coordinate with district, provincial and national authorities [program] activities ensuring that there are synergies built with the national policies. This position requires excellent command of English [and other languages]. This post requires a high computer literacy with a full knowledge of Office applications.

<Describe three to five specific expectations in terms of qualifications, education or skills that are requirements for this position.>

**Success factors:**

<Define the specific behavior and attitudes critical to success in the position at time of hire and as it develops over time.>

**Signatures:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Employee

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Annex 6: Sample Indicators, Logframe and Workplan for Community Mobilization

Indicators to measure community mobilization and related activities should correspond to the logical framework for the country and/or program. This is only an illustrative list in order to help teams initiate thinking about indicators to include in new program development or for adding ways to track progress made toward mobilization objectives that may not have been included in original logical frameworks. Some of the indicators language is intentionally broad and designed to allow for multiple data types to represent varying contexts. Remember indicators should always be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Targeted and Time-bound).

See [section 4.2: Assessment and Planning](#) and [section 4.5: Monitoring and Learning](#) for more ideas about using participatory approaches to gather information useful for monitoring and evaluation of mobilization programs. The DM&E In-a-Box materials for community mobilization can be found at: <https://mcdl.mercycorps.org/gsdll/cgi-bin/library?c=progdev&a=d&gc=2&cl=CL1.7.6.5#CL1.7.6.5>

### General Indicators (applicable across project sectors)

#### *Mission Metrics Indicators*<sup>25</sup>

- Number and percentage of community members organized and engaged in collective community action<sup>26</sup>
- Marginalized populations play a role in community decision-making<sup>27</sup>

#### *Other General Indicators*

- Attitude and behavior change in communities (measured through community cooperation index and increased intercommunity activity)
- Percentage community member satisfaction with CAGs
- Percentage community members actively involved community projects
- Improvement in community capacity (measured through community capacity index)
- Number CAGs formed and diversity of CAG membership (women, youth, ethnic groups)
- Number trainings conducted for CAGs and number and diversity of participants
- Number partnerships with government, NGOs/CBOs, private sector actors, and other communities
- Increase in number of communities where Mercy Corps works
- New community-led activities as a result of the project

### Small, Physical Infrastructure Projects<sup>28</sup>

#### *General*

- Increase in disposable income per household per month
- Time saved per household per month
- Percentage communities/community members benefit from increased or sustained job opportunities and incomes through employment on infrastructure projects and participation in community development projects.

#### *Irrigation/Agricultural Development Projects*

- Increase in disposable income per household per month
- No of additional hectares irrigated.
- Increased agricultural output per hectare.

#### *Drinking Water/Gas/Electricity Projects*

- Number of beneficiaries having gas, electricity and/or similar services through the provision of improved infrastructure, human and physical resources, including improved community ownership and responsibility through existing or new CAGs, Maintenance Committees and user groups/associations.

<sup>25</sup> Mercy Corps' Mission Metrics is an internal performance management initiative developing agency-level indicators that are reflective of our mission statement.

<sup>26</sup> There is no standard definition at this time for 'engaged in collective community action' but the Mission Metric will seek evidence of some change or activity at the community level attributable to community mobilization.

<sup>27</sup> This Mission Metric will look beyond inclusion, or simple participation of marginalized groups and seek evidence of active decision-making and/or its result.

<sup>28</sup> Indicators for physical infrastructure or other sector projects can be linked to either community mobilization objectives or program sectors.

- Increase in electricity/water provided as a result of the project
- Increase in disposable income per month per household
- Time saved per household per month (e.g. collecting water, firewood, etc.)
- New businesses/activities as a result of the provision of gas/electricity

#### *Schools/ Health facilities/ Libraries/Cultural Centers*

- Increase in attendance or use of services
- New services/activities provided as a result of the project

#### **Emergency Response**

- Number or percentage of communities that have elements of long-term recovery programming included in emergency response activities within 90 days (refers to rapid on-set emergencies only)
- Number and percentage of households showing change in assessed condition (wat-san, shelter, food security, health) (tools for assessment to be developed with consideration of GEO, ECB, and SPHERE Standards)

#### **Market/Private Sector**

- Number of new markets accessed
- Number of jobs created
- Increase in net profit for community enterprises
- Number of businesses directly assisted (i.e. trainings for community enterprises in business management)
- Increase in prosperity (measured through sales, production, profit, or cash-for-work wages)

#### **Participation Indicators**

- Number of people participating in the project implementation
- Number of people participating in the project monitoring
- Disaggregated composition of participation of age, gender, etc.
- Capacities increased as a result of meetings, issues resolved as a result of increased knowledge
- Diversity of issues raised and discussed at various stages of the project.
- Number of incidents that authorities take people's views into account during planning or involve CSOs or residents in planning
- Percent CAG members report using skills developed through the program in other ways
- Perception of CAG members about their ability to work as a team, or be effective at resolving issues etc.
- Number of people participating in events organized by projects without direct involvement of the Mercy Corps program
- Rate of public participation in policy advocacy issues.
- Community groups that formed and are able to function on their own.

#### **Indicators for using the Organizational Capacity Index (CBOs and NGOs)**

- Percentage of community members who feel a CAG has the capacity to manage community projects that benefit the whole community
- Percentage CAGs adopting at least XX new systems, policies, procedures and/or management practices as necessary for organizations' ability to advance and sustain activities in their community (determined through baseline or organizational assessments)

Additional indicators for working with communities in special contexts, such as countries in conflict/post-conflict and on specific sectors, such as economic development and health, can be found on the [Digital Library](#).

The logical framework and workplan on the following pages guided the Community Revitalization through Democratic Action (CRDA) program implemented in Serbia between 2001 and 2006. They offer one example for constructing mobilization programming.

**Community Revitalization Through Democratic Action (CRDA). USAID-Mercy Corps Strategic Framework**

**Strategic Objective 2.1: Increased Better Informed Citizens Participation  
in Political & Economic Decision Making**  
**Indicator 2.1: # of Clients Participating in Political and Economic Decision Making**

IR 2.1.1	IR 2.1.2	IR 2.1.3	IR 2.1.4 I	R 2.1.5
<b>Increased Citizens Participation in Community Development Activities</b>	<b>Increased Inter-Community interethnic Cooperation in Community Development Activities</b>	<b>Improved Social &amp; Economic Infrastructure</b>	<b>Increased Incomes &amp; Job Opportunities particularly for lowincome families</b>	<b>Improved Environmental Conditions &amp; Practices</b>
<b>Indicator</b> # of Clients represented through active community committees	<b>Indicator</b> # of Clients participating in cluster activities	<b>Indicator</b> # of Clients affected by improved social & economic infrastructure	<b>Indicator</b> # of Clients affected by enhanced economic opportunities	<b>Indicator</b> # of Clients affected by improved environmental conditions and practices
<b>Purpose</b> <b>Strengthen the Social &amp; Political Capital</b> Empower & Engage Citizens to Build Cohesive, Engaged and Revitalized Communities	<b>Purpose</b> <b>Strengthen the Social Capital</b> Narrow Inter-Community Ethnic Divides by Strengthening Convergences Among Communities	<b>Purpose</b> <b>Strengthen the Physical Capital</b> Improve Vital Community Infrastructure While Providing Maximum Economic Opportunities	<b>Purpose</b> <b>Strengthen the Economic Capital</b> Improve economic infrastructure While Providing Maximum Economic Opportunities	<b>Purpose</b> <b>Strengthen the Environmental Capital</b> Improve the environmental base While Providing Maximum Economic Opportunities
<b>Activities</b> 1. Community prioritizes need 2. Community Elects Representative Group 3. Capacity Building of Groups to Respond to Needs 4. Execution of Community Development Activities	<b>Activities</b> 1. Formation of Clusters 2. Community Groups Elect Cluster Representative Group 3. RFA Process to Select, Fund and Implement Cluster Projects with high Impact and Outreach	<b>Activities</b> 1. Tender for Design and Firms 2. Implement Projects 3. Monitor Quality, Progress and Safety 4. Sustainability Planning	<b>Activities</b> 1. Businesses Identify Assets and Needs 2. RFA Process to Select and Fund Agribusinesses and SMEs 3. Training, TA and investments to Businesses via Development Contracts.	<b>Activities</b> 1. Conduct environmental assessment 2. Community Elects environmental focal point 3. Highlight Environmental Hazards and consequences during planning 4. Integrate Education activities into other IR projects 5. Implement Stand-Alone projects (see IR2.1.3 for activities)
<b>Indicators</b> 1. # /type of groups formed 2. #/types of citizens represented thru groups 3. #/type of clients served thru projects 4. Type/value of community contributions 5. % satisfaction with community group and projects 6. # of priority needs addressed	<b>Indicators</b> 1. # /type of groups formed 2. #/types of joint projects proposed and funded 3. #/type of inter-ethnic projects proposed and funded 4. #/type of clients served by projects 5. % satisfaction with cluster groups 6. # of priority cluster needs met	<b>Indicators</b> 1. # of social infrastructures brought to adequate standards and maintned 2. # of economic infrastructures improved and maintained 3. # of day jobs created 4. #/types of clients served 5. % of community satisfied with services/ infrastructure	<b>Indicators</b> 1. % increase in agricultural production 2. % increase in services available 3. % increase in industrial capacity 4. # of jobs created 5. #/types of businesses assisted 6. % increase in marketing and other business skills	<b>Indicators</b> 1. # of environmental projects 2. % increase in community awareness of positive environmental practices 3. # of improvements to local and cluster environment sustained 4. # of environmental conditions brought to standards and maintained

Gantt Chart  
Community Revitalization through Democratic Action (CRDA)  
Illustrative Annual Work Plan-Year One

ACTIVITIES	2001						2002						
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
<b>Project Start-Up Activities</b>													
Consultation with USAID re: geographic area, selection criteria)	█												
Establish M&E plan with USAID	█												
Recruitment and hire staff		█											
Regional Office/procurement/systems set-up													
Training and orientation of staff		█											
First Annual Workplan submitted to USAID	█												
Coordinate with other agencies		█											
Baseline assessment of assigned area	█	█											
Establish 3 sub-offices		█	█										
ToT for two key staff in APM (expat and national)	█												
APM training for CRDA team and key community members		█											
<b>IR 2.1.1 Community Mobilization <sup>1</sup></b>			Round #1		#2		#3		#4		#5		#6
Identify (6-8) "pilot" CRDA communities	█												
Activity #1 Initial round of promotional meetings													
Two day baseline community meetings													
Activity #2 Action Planning Workshops													
Activity #3 Community Initiative Group Identified													
Priority needs identified													
Activity #4 CRDA TA in action planning and project design													
Select 'pilot' Confidence Building Project													
Develop Action Plan (w/guidance from CRDA team) <sup>2</sup>													
Project #1 implementation													
Pilot project assessment (CIG & CRDA team)													
Action Plan for priority project #2													
TA in action planning support													
Implementation of priority project #2													
Evaluation with CIG, CRDA team & municipal reps <sup>3</sup>													
Discuss follow-up, sustainability plan, cluster projects													
<b>IR 2.1.2. Inter-community Cooperation <sup>4</sup></b>													
Activity #1 Cluster Identified													
Activity #2 Electing the cluster committee													
Activity #3 Bidders meetings in the cluster center													
Launch RFAs													
CIGs prepare cluster proposals													
Project selected (CRDA & cluster committees)													
Implement selected cluster project													
Activity #4 Cluster review, management, follow-up, inter-cluster projects													
<b>IR 2.1.3. Improved Social and Economic Infrastructure</b>													
Activity #1 Tendering & selecting design and contractors/firms													
Approval & consultations with government/stakeholders													
Bidders conference at cluster level to inform potential bidders													
Activity #2 Project Implementation													
Activity #3 Monitoring project progress, quality/safety standards													
Translate safety manual into local language													
Activity #4 Community contributions and sustainability plans													
<b>IR 2.1.4 Increased Incomes and Job Opportunities</b>													
CIG/cluster identifies priorities													
Activity #1 Action planning meeting on EO development													
Activity #2 CRDA team announces/releases an RFA													

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## **Annex 7: Country-specific Mobilization Guides and Related Resources**

This section highlights the work by some country teams, which have developed context-specific guidance, tools and trainings for their mobilization staff and partners, as well as general Mercy Corps tools and guides referenced in the previous chapters. The list is not exhaustive and recommendations for tools and resources to add for future printings of this guide should be emailed to Ruth Allen at [rallen@bos.mercycorps.org](mailto:rallen@bos.mercycorps.org)

### [Mercy Corps DM&E-in-a-Box. 2009.](#)

DM&E-in-a-Box is a comprehensive set of tools to assist DM&E, from assessment/design, to conducting a baseline or evaluation, to setting up a country-level M&E system. DM&E-in-a-Box was developed by and for practitioners as a proven, fundamental resource for planning and carrying out DM&E activities in the field.

### [Mercy Corps Eritrea: Community Mobilization Guide. 2005.](#)

The purpose of this manual is to provide community development facilitators with the following tools: capacity building; participation; development; Community Action Group/Community-Based Organizations Capacity Index; facilitation skills.

### [Mercy Corps Georgia: East Georgia Community Mobilization Initiative – Community Mobilization Manual. 2003.](#)

This manual covers the following areas, as they pertained to the East Georgia Community Mobilization Initiative: the community mobilization process; action planning; project preparation; capacity building; financial procedures; and monitoring.

### [Mercy Corps Indonesia: Community Mobilization Orientation. 2009.](#)

The orientation provides an overview of Mercy Corps-Indonesia's community mobilization framework. Chapter 3 describes the project cycle and how the community mobilization framework can be incorporated into project design.

### [Mercy Corps Mongolia: Training, Advocacy, and Networking Project Community Mobilization and Bagh Assessment Guidelines. Mercy Corps. 2009.](#)

This guide provides an overview of the community mobilization process for the Training, Advocacy, and Networking (TAN) project in Mongolia. The process includes community profiling, needs assessments, stakeholder consultations and planning.

### [Mercy Corps Sub-Grant Management Manual. 1998.](#)

This manual was designed to assist field offices in designing and implementing programs by providing sample policies, procedures and forms.

### [Mercy Corps Sri Lanka: Annual Results Review Meeting – Presentation on Ampara Community Feedback Sessions. Kandy, 23 June 2008.](#)

This power-point presentation provides an overview of community feedback sessions, which gave insight on how to improve the performance of Community Action Groups and develop action plans for the future. The presentation will be useful to field staff for similar sessions by mobilization teams.

### [Mercy Corps Sri Lanka: Community-based Development and Community-based Conflict Management Manual. 2008.](#)

The manual provide general concepts, definitions and guidelines for the implementation of the Mercy Corps Community Development Programs in Sri Lanka and is relevant for similar contexts. It also provides the tools, forms, and examples that will assist Mercy Corps and its partners to carry out an integrated community development strategy using both community mobilization and community-based conflict management approaches. It is particularly useful for field staff involved in the implementation of program activities on a regular basis.

## **Sample Mercy Corps Community Mobilization Program Evaluations**

### [Mercy Corps Georgia: East Georgia Community Mobilization Initiative \(E-GCMI\). End of Program Evaluation. 2000.](#)

### [Mercy Corps Guatemala. Community Health and Advancement Initiative \(CHAI\). Final Evaluation. 2008.](#)

### [Mercy Corps Iraq: Community Action Program I. Looking Back and Looking Forward: Iraq Community Action Program \(ICAP\) Evaluation. 2006.](#)

[Mercy Corps Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan: Community Action Investment Program. Final Evaluation. 2002.](#)

[Mercy Corps Niger: Skills and Knowledge for Youth Empowerment \(SKYE\). Final Evaluation \(in French\). 2008.](#)

[Mercy Corps Serbia: Community Revitalization through Democratic Action \(CRDA\). Evaluation of CRDA Projects Final Report. 2007.](#)

### External Resources

Anderson, Mary. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – or War*. Lynne Rienner Publishers: 1999.  
See section 1.4 of this guide for a discussion of the Do No Harm methodology introduced by this landmark book.

Anderson, Mary and Luc Zandvliet *Getting it right: Making Corporate-Community Relations Work*. Greenleaf Publishing: 2009.

This book captures the lessons and experience gathered through the Corporate Engagement Project since 2000. It will be useful to headquarters staff.

*Capacity 21 Kendelevu Toolkit: A Manual for Trainers in Participatory and Sustainable Development Planning*. Kendelevu Project. Nairobi: Kenya. 2006.

The Capacity 21 Kendelevu Toolkit was developed by Kenyan experts for the joint UNDP-Poverty and Environment Initiative, and serves as an example of a locally-led community mobilization manual. The purpose of the Toolkit is to introduce methods for participatory planning, which can be used to assist communities to formulate and implement their community action plans. It is targeted to facilitators and community activists.

Cavelli, Andrea and John Gaventa. "Bridging the gap: citizenship, participation and accountability." In *PLA Notes* 40. February 2001.

This commentary provides an overview on how accountability and citizen participation mechanisms are being utilized globally.

Dasgupta, Partha and Ismail Serageldin (Eds.). *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective*. The World Bank: Washington DC. 2000.

This book offers academic and practical guidance on how to build social capital in different contexts. It has also provided the underpinning of the World Bank's logic in participatory development programming.

Gardner, Alison, Kara Greenblott and Erika Joubert. "What we Know about Exit Strategies: Practical Guidance for Developing Exit Strategies in the Field." C-Safe. 2005.

This guidance document provides insight on how to improve understanding and ability to develop and implement sound Exit Strategies from Developmental Relief Programs. It will be useful to field staff.

Garred, Michelle (ed.). *A Shared Future: Local Capacities for Peace in Community Development*. World Vision International: Monrovia, CA. 2006.

Geyer, Yvette. *Community Organizing: A Handbook Series for Community-Based Organizations*. IDASA. 2006.

Insights from this handbook include how to identify needs and special interest groups; how to conduct needs assessments; and how to devise action plans and implementation strategies. It will be useful for field office staff and partners. Also see: *Advocacy and Communication Handbook*.

Geyer, Yvette. *Integrated Development Planning: Handbook Series for Community-Based Organizations*. IDASA. 2006.

The series gives an overview of the various processes to put integrated development planning in place at a local level, based on the premise that integrated development planning is the most important mechanism available to governments to transform structural differences in a divided society.

Krishna, A. "How does social capital grow? A seven-year study of villages in India." *Journal of Politics* 69 (2007): 941-956.

This article provides academic analysis on how community mobilization projects have also built social cohesion and investment. It will be useful to both headquarters and field office staff.

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Mefalopoulos, Paolo and Chris Kamlongera. *Participatory Communication Strategy Design*. SADC Center for Communication and Development/Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN: Rome. 2004.

This Handbook was prepared as a training and field guide for designing, implementing and managing communication strategies for development purposes based on the results of field Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal (PRCA). The book is a follow up to *Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal: Starting with the People*, which is also a good resource for project design. It will be useful for field office staff.

National Democratic Institution for International Affairs. *Increasing Citizen Participation through Advocacy Efforts: A Guidebook for Program Development*. NDI: Washington, DC. 2000.

This guidebook provides practical lessons for assessing civil society, managing partnerships, ensuring the inclusion of typically marginalized groups, and developing project tools. It will be useful for headquarters and field office staff in designing and implementing programming.

Oxfam GB. *Speaking Out, Programme Insights*, Oxfam GB. November 2008.

These papers analyze how the right to be heard can strengthen the participation of people in poverty in formulating public policy, and enable them to hold decision-makers accountable. This paper also provides a useful framework for understanding active citizenship and power. It will be useful for both Mercy Corps headquarters and field staff.

Pretty, J., I. Gault, J. Thompson and I. Scoones. *A Trainer's Guide for Participatory Learning and Action*. International Institute for Environment and Development, London. 1995.

Straight Talk Foundation. *Using Radio to Help Communities Talk – A Manual for Community Dialogue*. Straight Talk Foundation: Kampala. 2006.

This manual offers insight on how local actors can use local media resources to initiate community dialogue and action. It will be useful for Mercy Corps field office staff.

World Bank. *The World Bank Participation Sourcebook*. The World Bank: Washington DC. 1996.

This sourcebook provides an analysis of lessons learned and tips for participatory development processes. The annex also offers a “how-to” guide for Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). This source would be useful for both headquarters and field staff.

Wampler, Brian. *A Guide to Participatory Budgeting*. International Budget Project. 2000.

Participatory budgeting programs act as “citizenship schools” to empower citizens to better understand their rights and duties. To promote these “citizenship schools,” this paper provides insight on conditions necessary for participatory budgeting. This paper will be useful for Mercy Corps field office staff.